

# **THE QUEST AFTER PERFECTION**

BY  
**M. HIRIYANNA**



**KAVYALAYA : PUBLISHERS : MYSORE**

*First Published 1952*

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PRINTED IN INDIA  
AT THE WESLEY PRESS AND PUBLISHING HOUSE  
MYSORE

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This is the second volume of Essays by Prof. M. Hiriyanna to be published—almost simultaneously with the first, *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy*. Six, out of the eight studies collected here, have already made their appearance in various journals and other publications. Of the other two, *Philosophy of Values* is a contribution to the forthcoming revised edition of the *Cultural Heritage of India*; and *Śaṅkara's Conception of Ultimate Value* which seems to have been a lecture delivered on a Śaṅkara Anniversary, is being printed for the first time.

We have made use of the author's corrected copies, as in the case of the earlier volume, *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy*; and some of the marginal notes therein appear here as footnotes.

We are deeply grateful to the late Prof. Hiriyanna's daughter and near relations who have given us all possible help in the preparation of this volume also. Our thanks are due to Sri N. Sivarama Sastry of the Department of Sanskrit in the University of Mysore, who has been very helpful editorially; to Sri R. K. Narayan, for his continuing interest in the publication; and to the Wesley Press and Publishing House who have given their best to make the volume attractive.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The late Prof. Hiriyanṇa's daughter desires to express her grateful thanks to the Secretary, the *Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona; to the Secretaries of the *Indian Philosophical Congress* and to the Registrar, *University of Madras*, Madras, who have readily expressed their sense of co-operation in the publication of the essays collected herein, which made their first appearance in periodicals published by them.

M. R.

## FIRST PUBLICATION

### THE ETHICS OF THE UPANIṢADS

*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. v. Part i.  
1923-4.

### THE PLACE OF FEELING IN CONDUCT: Advaita

*Symposium, Twelfth Indian Philosophical Congress*, Delhi, 1936.

### THE INDIAN CONCEPTION OF VALUES

*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. xix.  
Part i. 1938.

### THE MESSAGE OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

*Indian Philosophical Congress*, Hyderabad (Deccan), 1940.

### THE QUEST AFTER PERFECTION (Miller Lectures, 1940)

*Journal of the Madras University*, Vol. xiii. 2.

### A NEGLECTED IDEAL OF LIFE

*Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume, Indian Philosophical Congress*, 1950.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ait. Up.</i>	...	<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Kaṭh. Up.</i>	...	<i>Kaṭha Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Ch. Up.</i>	...	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Taitt. Up.</i>	...	<i>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Pr. Up.</i>	...	<i>Praśna Upaniṣad</i>
<i>BG.</i>	...	<i>Bhagavadgītā</i>
<i>Br. Up.</i>	...	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>

## ERRATA

Page 14, Footnote. *Read* ' . . . *duḥkṣa-mātra-phalatvāt.*

Page 12, line 2. *Read* According to Advaita.

# THE QUEST AFTER PERFECTION

## THE ETHICS OF THE UPANIṢADS

The word 'upaniṣad' as commonly used denotes a large number of words which neither belong to the same age nor inculcate the same system of doctrines. We shall not take into account all these works here, but shall confine our attention to the most ancient of them. They are hardly more than a dozen in number; but though so few, they constitute almost the whole basis of the *Vedānta* as systematised later in the *Sūtras* of *Bādarāyaṇa*. Even in these classical Upaniṣads, it is true, chronological differences and variations of doctrine can be traced; but they yet exhibit a certain family resemblance and may all be referred to practically the same phase in the evolution of Indian thought. Our object here is to sketch in outline the ethical teaching of these *Upaniṣads*.

In the second section of the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad-Brahma-Vallī*—we have a description of the five *kośas*, which are so termed because they are conceived as forming 'sheaths' to the soul of man. In simple unfigurative language, we have here a statement of five different phases of man's being,—his body, his subconscious, conscious and self-conscious life, and last, a still higher grade of existence which he sometimes manifests, as for instance, when he is contemplating the true and the holy. Of these five *kośas*, according to the description found here, it is only the third and the fourth—the *manomaya-kośa* and the *vijñānamaya-kośa*—that are directly related to moral life. Thus the former is expressed in terms of the four *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas* which, according to orthodox opinion, together constitute a divine moral code; and the latter is described by means of conceptions such as truth and righteousness, which are universally associated with ethical conduct. Evidently they represent two successive stages in moral training and the distinction between them is based upon the fact that the performance of a right deed and the abstention from a wrong one may result from external compulsion or from an inner sense of rectitude.

The *Samhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas* in terms of which the third *kośa* is described are an external authority enjoining on us the practice of virtue and the avoidance of vice. In the next stage, the ethical standard changes altogether and becomes internal. 'Of it faith is the head; purity of thought, the right side; purity of deed, the left side; application, the trunk, and the Great<sup>1</sup> (or Universal Mind) the tail that supports.' In one sense, no doubt, the latter alone is genuine moral life; but the former is not therefore to be counted unnecessary; for right conduct is at first learnt through obedience to external law. That is how moral education begins and it is only by and by that one comes to practise virtue in its twofold aspect of purity of thought (*rta*) and purity of deed (*satya*) through a belief (*śraddhā*) in its intrinsic worth. Of the remaining three *kośas*, the first two have nothing in their constituent nature suggesting their connection with morality. They are intended only to mark off the life of the organism which man possesses in common with the rest of animate creation. The last or the *ānandamayakośa* again, whose essential nature—joy or bliss—implies the cessation of all strife, indicates the culmination rather than the process of ethical training. Here then we have an important principle enunciated in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, viz., that the sphere of morality is narrower than the sphere of life; and we shall try to elucidate it as we proceed.

In whatever manner we may express the end of morality, the essential feature of ethical training, considered as a practical process, is the overcoming of evil. For one that has no evil impulses at all, moral education loses all its meaning. In the Upaniṣadic answer then to the question 'what is evil?' we should look for light on the course which the education should take. Evil according to the Upaniṣads has its basis in narrow selfish desires. 'Hunger is death' says the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (I. ii. 1) and the same is repeated in several others<sup>2</sup>. Desire is no doubt something more than hunger and the latter is not always evil. But the identification of evil with it is intended to suggest two characteristics which hunger possesses in common

<sup>1</sup> *Mahāḥ iti mahat-tattvaṃ prathamajam*: Śaṅkara on *Tait. Up.* ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Compare e.g., *Ait. Up.* ii. 1; *Kaṭh. Up.* i. 12.

with other natural cravings. These cravings seek immediate satisfaction and are affections of the individual organism as distinguished from its environment. Evil then is the tendency on the one hand to satisfy present needs without any thought of the future; and, on the other, to satisfy one's needs as distinguished from those of the environment. In this twofold character of our first impulses for which really the word 'hunger' stands in the Upaniṣads, we discover the need for moral training in two stages: one, in which the chief emphasis is laid on the performance of *kāmyakarmas* or 'optional deeds,' and the other, in which that emphasis is transferred to *nityakarmas* or 'obligatory deeds.' The Upaniṣads do not explicitly distinguish these two stages for a reason which we shall presently state, but the distinction is throughout implied; for whenever they prescribe<sup>1</sup> *karma*, they prescribe it as *nitya*, thereby suggesting another stage in which *kāmyakarmas* occupy the more important place.

Each of these stages has its own use in ethical training. The *kāmya* stage, no doubt, fosters the thought of self by recommending selfish ends, but yet it stands higher than mere animal life because the self for which exertion is permitted here is a better understood self than when the end is immediate gratification. There is a clear moral problem even here, viz., how the claims to satisfaction of the actual self of the moment are to be reconciled with those of the ideal self of the future. Again while the main thought is occupied here with the self, it must be remembered that the environment is not altogether lost sight of. If it were, morality would be another name for prudence or forethought. The *kāmyakarmas* have all a reference to social environment and, though apparently performed for securing individual well-being, are yet beneficial in some form or other to society as well. The fact is that there is no contradiction between the well-being of the individual and the well-being of society. The two may not always coincide; but there is no necessary opposition between them, so that asserting the one is not the same as denying the other. But the peculiarity of the training of this stage is that the reference to society in it is implicit. This reference becomes explicit in the next stage, where the object of moral training is *consciously* to reconcile the

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Br. Up.* IV. iv. 22. See also *Vedānta-sūtras*, III. iv. 26 and 32.

respective claims of the individual and his environment. One's own desires, to gratify which there is a natural propensity, are here adjusted to the requirements of society. The problem is once again how to reconcile the claims to satisfaction of apparently contradictory impulses. Only, now the adjustment is not between the present and future interests of one and the same individual, but between those of the individual and of his fellow-beings. Morality in this stage thus becomes explicitly social. This is the significance of the shifting of the emphasis once laid on *kāmya-karmas* to *nitya-karmas*, otherwise known as *varṇāśrama-dharmas*. It is the fulfilment of social obligations to the best of one's ability that constitutes one's first aim in this stage. But at the same time it should be stated that the rights of the individual are not at all forgotten. He who makes an honest effort to discharge his duties has a right to expect from society the kind of treatment proper to him, as is clear, for instance, from the fact that according to Hindu *Sāstra*, it is obligatory on a householder to feed a *brahmacārin* or religious student who is discharging his duty,—very essential to a progressive society,—of receiving instruction in the ancient learning of the community, with a view to preserve and transmit it to his successors. Thus in neither of the states is the good of either the society or the individual neglected; only the emphasis on the two is differently distributed in them.

If the training in both these stages be conducted properly, the progress made will indeed be great. As compared with the original conception of the self, the one now reached will certainly be far advanced; but it is clear from what has been stated already that the individual will still continue to be set over against society. In other words, the morality practised will be relative, life being viewed as comprehending rights and duties. The conception of duality thus persists; and so long as it does, the possibility of conflict is not wholly excluded. As the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* (ii. 7) has it, the slightest notion of distinction is fraught with fear. Thus the training so far in progress, however beneficial, has its own deficiency. It has undoubtedly deepened the conception of the self by pointing out its dependence upon and the consequent obligations to other selves: but these other selves are still viewed as distinct from one's own self. So long as such a distinction is maintained, perfection, according to the

Upaniṣads, cannot be reached. Where the thought of diversity endures, no deed, however altruistic, is without its own bearing upon the self of the doer. This bearing may be remote, but all the same it is there, so that what is sought in all duties, is, in the last instance, some form of one's own satisfaction. No voluntary action according to the Upaniṣads is intelligible without some reference to the self. That is the teaching of the *Maitreyī-Brāhmaṇa*; 'Verily nothing is loved for its own sake; but only for the sake of one's own self' (*Br. Up.* II. iv. 5). This statement, however, should not be understood as denying differences of moral worth between one deed and another. An element of such difference should be clear from what has already been stated. The life of one who cares only for the vulgar pleasures of the moment, certainly stands much lower than that of one whose activity is based upon an apprehension of the ideal self. Similarly, one duty *as such* may not be different from another in point of moral value; but there can be no question whatever that duties, as a whole, in which the reference to the self is mediate, are morally more commendable than deeds in which that reference is immediate. What the *Maitreyī-Brāhmaṇa* signifies is that egoism and altruism, being correlates, necessarily imply each other; and that to attain absolute unselfishness the contrast between them should be transcended. So long as this contrast is present to the mind, there can be no truly disinterested activity, which arises only when the conception of the self is so enlarged as to become all-comprehensive. In other words, moral perfection is not achieved until the metaphysical nature of the self is apprehended. That is why *Yājñavalkya*, after pointing out to his wife *Maitreyī* what may be called the 'paradox of altruism', instructs her to realise the true self as the sole means of overcoming egoism. 'Whoever regards anything as other than himself is discarded by it.' (Passage 6).

In the case of every individual, a time will come when the thought of this deficiency in the morality of even the second stage will force itself on the mind and cause a deep dissatisfaction. He will then refuse to look upon either the individual or society as ultimate and strive to reach a level of action which is at once super-individual and super-social. It is to people upon whom such consciousness has dawned that the Upaniṣads address them-

selves; and it is this feeling of dissatisfaction with not only the first stage of moral education but also with the second, that is termed *vairāgya*, the importance of which is so much emphasised in all the Upaniṣads. As the *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* has it (ii. 13), the Upaniṣadic knowledge should be imparted only to a pupil 'whose thoughts are not troubled by any desires and who has obtained peace.' Being thus addressed to a particular class of students, viz., those that have already reached a considerable degree of moral development, the Upaniṣads do not treat of the entire range of ethical life; but only of its culminating stages. The training of the *vedāntin* begins much earlier than his formal initiation into the proper study of the Upaniṣads. The failure to recognise this fact has been the source of some incorrect views regarding the place of morality in the Upaniṣadic scheme of life. Thus one of the common criticisms levelled against it is that it cares little or nothing for social morality and concerns itself solely with pointing out the way to individual perfection. Even a well-informed and sympathetic critic like Deussen has stated<sup>1</sup> that among the ancient Indians 'the consciousness of human solidarity, of common needs and interests was but slightly developed.' Such conclusions are due to a lack of appreciation of the specific standpoint of the Upaniṣads to which attention has just now been drawn. As a matter of fact, the Hindu conception of life is very much wider than what we find it to be from the Upaniṣads, which are not interested in traversing the entire field of ethical training. They presuppose a certain moral equipment in the *vedāntic* initiate and proceed to explain the course he has to pursue thereafter. This is the significance for instance of the question of *adhikāra* or 'fitness' which is explicitly discussed in the beginning of *Vedāntic* works and is found implicit in so many Upaniṣadic passages. For one that is an *adhikārī* and therefore possesses, among other things, the required degree of preliminary moral culture, the 'objective worth' of a moral deed may not count for much. But this does not warrant us in assuming,<sup>2</sup> as Deussen does, that its 'subjective worth' is overestimated. The aim in this final stage is rather to transcend both; and we ought not therefore to conclude that in the view of the Upaniṣads, either is less important than the other. There is a

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, pp. 364-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 365.



whole field of Sanskrit literature, *Dharmaśāstras* and *Smṛtis*,—that is directly concerned with the elaboration of this preliminary moral training intended for persons in lower stages of spiritual evolution. Although based upon ancient Vedic literature, these works are generally posterior to the Upaniṣads and their evidence accordingly is not of much consequence here. But the Upaniṣads themselves are not without clear references to this preliminary training. In fact, the whole of their teaching is set in this ethical background; and it would be quite unfair to condemn their view of life as defective after disengaging it from its setting. The description of this preliminary training, however, as already stated, lies outside the proper sphere of the Upaniṣads; but yet they do at times digress into an exposition of it, the passage which we have already quoted from the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* being one of the clearest.

Of other passages that may be cited in this connection, we shall mention but one,—the *Puruṣa-Vidya-brāhmaṇa* (*Br. Upaniṣad*, I. iv), which contains, in a nut-shell the entire Upaniṣadic teaching of idealistic monism. There are two movements of thought here, the first (1-10),—the metaphysical one,—showing how the manifold universe is the result of self-evolution on the part of *Ātman* or ultimate Reality, and the second (11-17),—the ethical one,—indicating the path which one has to follow if one has to recover from the lapse implied by individuation and realise the essential unity of all. In this section then, contrary to the general plan of the Upaniṣads, the practical teaching is set in the back-ground of the theoretical. In the ethical part, with which alone we are at present concerned, is briefly traced the evolution of the several *varṇas* or social classes. What was originally but a simple social structure came to be differentiated into four classes in course of time. Of these the Kṣatriya is represented as the mainstay of society, since it is to his prowess and control that it owes its preservation from external as well as internal danger. But physical might and external control do not adequately explain social order. It has a deeper basis and the stability of society has eventually to be traced to the moral idea implanted in man. Accordingly the Upaniṣad represents it in its inner (*satya*) as well as its outer (*dharma*) aspects as the mainstay of the Kṣatriya himself,—‘the mainstay of mainstays’

of society. It is through this moral idea that both the individual and the society are maintained. He who follows the *varṇa-dharmas* befriends all and all befriend him (passage 16). The individual and his environment are thus shown to be interdependent,—environment not understood merely socially, but in the widest sense so as to include not only the actual and the seen, but also the possible and the unseen; even beings of far higher grade than human. The Upaniṣad indicates at the same time that this conception of interdependence is not ultimate. All this, even the highest moral merit (*punya*) sooner or later fails to give satisfaction; so one should seek only to realise the true self. That is the only true end where all will be attained (passage 15). The final aim of life accordingly consists not in working for any object, no matter how high, considered as extrinsic, but for the all-inclusive whole, of which 'end' and 'means', 'doer' and 'deed' are only different phases (passage 17). But the previous stages are by no means regarded as futile. Passage 10, for example, represents the *devas* as unwilling to allow man to emancipate himself from the sphere of relative morality, which, according to Śaṅkara, is merely a rhetorical way of expressing that man ought not to break away from society until he has discharged his duty towards it and so to speak, gained its goodwill.

Thus the specific teaching of the Upaniṣads is that the highest good is not reached until one gets beyond relative morality to the level of life marked by the *ānandamaya-kośa*, where all moral strife ceases once for all. Our first efforts no doubt should be directed towards co-ordinating social and individual needs; but eventually the distinction between the two is itself to be transcended. The notions of self and of society are not to be understood as destroyed thereby; they only merge in the notion of the whole. The individual and society are no longer viewed as two separate entities related externally to each other; but merely as different aspects of a single whole. 'From death to death, passes he who perceives only variety here (*Kaṭh. Up. iv. 10*). Through such transcendence of the common consciousness, the moral agent realises that society has no wants apart from those of the individual or the individual apart from those of the society. He beholds all beings in the self, and the

self in all beings (*Īśa Up.* 6). Accordingly the object aimed at in this final stage is neither the good of the individual nor of society as such, but common good; or rather individual good itself now becomes identical with common good. In other words, the distinction between rights and duties is here annulled and the relative morality of the previous stage now becomes transformed into absolute morality. Two important results follow from this transformation. First the moral end becomes fixed once for all. New interests may arise or old ones disappear in the course of time; but they have value only from the lower standpoint of the individual as such or society as contrasted with him. Such changes may disturb the mutual relations of internal factors, but cannot affect the whole, whose end, as we have stated, now constitutes the sole criterion of conduct. This end does not admit of any change (*Kaṭh. Up.* iv. 13). 'It rules the past as well as the future—is the same to-day as well as to-morrow.' 'If a slayer think of slaying, if the slain think of being slain,—(then) both of them know not the self. It neither slays nor is slain' (*Ibid.* ii. 19). The earlier stages of morality only pave the way for this. 'That, all penance presupposes; seeking that, men practise continence' (*Ibid.* ii. 18). Secondly, evil, which as defined above has its roots in narrow selfish desires, is now completely overcome. 'When to a knower, discovering unity, all beings become his very self, what delusion, then and what sorrow?' (*Īśa Up.* 7). The Upaniṣadic seers almost revel in describing the peace and tranquillity of this super-moral condition. The most important of these descriptions is to be found in a section of the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* (ii. 8) entitled 'Inquiry into Happiness' (*ānandasya mīmāṃsā*). According to the teaching of this section there is no qualitative distinction in pleasure, all pleasures eventually emanating from the same source.<sup>1</sup> All estimate of happiness, when it can be estimated at all, is quantitative. Apart from this relative happiness which can be presented in a series of graded values, there is another experienced by the morally perfect, which baffles all measurement. This is indicated with characteristic emphasis when the Upaniṣad gives in this section what may be described as a 'Table of Pleasure Values,'

<sup>1</sup> This is the highest bliss. Of that bliss all other beings draw a little. *Bṛ. Up.* IV. iii. 32.

inserting at every stage the identical statement 'the joy of one uninfected with personal desires is a hundred times more.' The import of this is that the blessedness of moral perfection cannot be expressed in terms of pleasure derived from the satisfaction of particular desires. It is not a mere aggregate of pleasures such as we know; but absolute bliss due to the conviction that one's own self is identical with the whole. Consequently it is often stated in the Upaniṣads that all desires are fulfilled here<sup>1</sup> and that, no want being felt, true inward freedom is here reached.<sup>2</sup>

We have said that in this final state, the distinction between duties and rights is annulled. It is of great importance to note that this annulment does not mean the cessation of activity itself, even supposing such a thing is possible. The *Īśa Upaniṣad* (2) for example, to which we have alluded more than once, after prescribing renunciation, adds that the life led should be a strenuous one. 'One should live all his days only working.' It is thus only that the relative aspect of rights and duties disappears. They endure as activity, which is now controlled by the thought of not what is only a partial good, but of the good of the whole. It would therefore be more correct to say that morality is now fulfilled, not destroyed. Life's activities are not abandoned, but only come to be viewed from a new standpoint. As in the case of the transition from the first to the second stage, life once again comes to be planned on a new basis. All this makes it clear that the charge of promulgating a doctrine of absolute quietism commonly brought by critics against the Upaniṣads is unfounded. The ideal of *Upaniṣadic* ethics is rather the attainment of impersonal activity; and its import, not redemption from the world, but only from *rāga* and *dveṣa*, hatred and narrow love. The *varṇāśrama-dharmas* no doubt cease to be binding upon one that enters upon the final stage of the ideal life, for implying as they do an external relation between the individual and the environment, they cannot appeal to him who

<sup>1</sup> Compare e.g., *Ch. Up.* VII. xxiii; *Tait. Up.* ii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Ch. Up.* VIII. i and ii. All this, by the way, tells us what the Upaniṣadic conception of pleasure is. Whenever we feel happy we transcend the antithesis of common consciousness. The thought of the ego is in abeyance then and we get a glimpse of the wider self which is the truth. All pleasure, as we know it, is thus a revelation in greater or less degree of absolute pleasure.

realises in his own experience the unity of both. *Saṁnyāsa* or renunciation is an outward sign of this transcendence of social morality and selfish needs. But virtues of a general nature such as kindness and charity, he will of course continue to practise; but even they become transformed in his eyes, since they involve no thought of owed and owing.

utpannātmaprabodhasyādvēṣṭṛtvādayo guṇāḥ |  
ayatnato bhavantyasya na tu sādhanarūpiṇaḥ ||

*Naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, iv. 69.

Several illustrations are given in the Upaniṣads to impress on our mind the importance of such disinterested activity. The most notable and the most common of them is that relating to *Prāṇa*. The various senses and other life-organs function for the sake of the whole bodily system. But over and above contributing to the general well-being of the body, these organs operate in a manner which ministers directly to their own gratification. The eye, for example, sees and thus protects the organism from possible destruction which might arise in its absence. But it also often indulges in seeing for its own sake. Again, in the case of the sense of taste, the food that is eaten contributes to the upkeep of the body; but the organ of taste seeks also its own gratification in the process. It is quite different in the case of *Prāṇa* whose outward expression is the 'breath in the mouth' (*Br. Up. I. iii*). It has no purpose of its own to serve and functions solely for the organism. This is merely an allegory intended to show what entire unselfishness means. A person that wishes to rise above the stage of social or relative morality should keep this ideal before him; and whatever he may do, he should do it, not for himself or even for others as distinguished from himself, but for the whole of the universe. That marks the achievement of life's object as conceived in the Upaniṣads.

## THE PLACE OF FEELING IN CONDUCT

ACCORDING TO THE ADVAITA

Nearly all the Indian systems of philosophy teach, on their practical side, the necessity for cultivating *vairāgya*. The reasons assigned for its cultivation may vary in the different systems, but they all agree that it is necessary. The need for it, so far as the Advaita is concerned, is clear from its inclusion in the fourfold aid to Brahma-knowledge set forth by Śaṅkara in the very beginning of his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Now *vairāgya* means dispassion or detachment from interest; and when we take this along with another of the qualifications laid down as necessary for entering upon the life of a Vedāntin, viz., discrimination between the eternal and the transient (*nityānityavastuviveka*) with its emphasis on reason, it seems that feeling has no place in conduct according to the Advaita. The point that we have to consider is whether this conclusion is in consonance with the doctrine taken as a whole; and, if it is not, to find out what exactly is to be understood from *vairāgya*. We shall consider the subject in two parts, as the discipline constituting the life of an Advaitin is broadly divisible into two stages. Before proceeding to this consideration, however, it is necessary to state clearly the sense in which the word 'feeling' is used here. It is taken in the sense of feeling of value or interest which the conscious pursuit of an end always implies. I do not at present propose to ask in what other sense, if any, feeling is involved in conduct, and shall postpone what I have to say on this point to the close of the Paper.

### I

The chief means recommended for the cultivation of *vairāgya* in the earlier of the two stages referred to above is the adoption of the life of a householder. The underlying idea here is that detachment cannot be achieved in the abstract, but only living in the midst of others and discharging the manifold duties that devolve upon one by doing so. The activities of a householder are, generally speaking, threefold: They include, in the first place, what are described as *sādhāraṇa-dharmas*, or duties common to all

without distinction of class (*varṇa*) or stage of life (*āśrama*) such as the practice of kindness, forbearance and charity. Next come those like fortitude and temperance that have reference to the self, and may be described as duties of self-culture. Lastly, and for the most part, they consist of duties towards one's special environment which is conceived mainly, though not exclusively,<sup>1</sup> as social. They are, for example, duties like fighting for one's country and king in the case of a prince and hospitality in the case of a householder. Being relative to the position which a person occupies in society, they are not binding on all; but, within the respective limits of their reference, they are quite obligatory and no one is allowed to choose from or change them at pleasure.<sup>2</sup> In other words, they belong to the sphere of the hypothetical, and not to that of the categorical, imperative. The first and last of these sets of activities, which aim at helping others, necessarily involve a good deal of self-denial. The second kind of activities also lead to the same result, but by directly imposing restrictions in various ways on impulsive action. Neither form of activity, however, precludes the pursuit of what is termed *abhyudaya* or lower human values like rank and riches, provided it does not come into conflict with the chief aim of the discipline of this stage, viz., self-culture and social service. It is the check upon selfish propensities implied in such discipline that is to be understood from *vairāgya* in this stage, and not a complete abandonment of interests. Even in the case of activities whose end is not personal, there is a pleasure which the agent feels in the thought of others' good; for otherwise he would not choose to labour for it. Hence feeling is not excluded from conduct in this stage.

It may be said that, though the discipline of the householder's life as described above might not once have excluded feeling from conduct, it does so now, because the conception of *varṇāśrama-dharmas* has since been totally transformed by the teaching of the *Gītā*<sup>3</sup> that whatever one does should be done without any thought of the result which may follow from it. This teaching may

<sup>1</sup> Compare the significance of daily rites like the five *mahā-yajñas* or 'great sacrifices'.

<sup>2</sup> Except when one changes one's *āśrama*.

<sup>3</sup> The *Gītā* Ideal is, no doubt, in theory, the starting-point of advaitic discipline; in practice, however, the householder's ideal, as originally conceived, is retained as a concession to the weak.

doubtless be taken to mean that duty should be done for its own sake, and that it should therefore be divorced from all interest. In that case there may be no room for feeling, in our sense of the term, in conduct. But, according to Śaṅkara with whose doctrine we are now concerned, disinterested activity, in the literal sense of the expression, is a psychological impossibility; and to insist upon it in the name of morality is, as he observes, to reduce life to a form of meaningless drudgery.<sup>1</sup> There is accordingly no conflict between duty and interest; and even deeds performed in the spirit of the Gītā teaching have in end, viz., *sattva-śuddhi*, 'the cleansing of the heart' or 'the purifying of the affections'. What is meant by the counsel that all thought of fruits should be dismissed from one's mind in the doing of duty is not that it should be emptied of all motive but that the *diverse* purposes of the deeds that fall to one's lot in life should be replaced by *one and the same* end, viz., self-conquest or the moral improvement of the agent. There is thus an end here as much as in the previous stage; only it is of a higher type, because it shuts out altogether the desire for inferior values (*abhyudaya*) and aims solely at subjective purification. *Vairāgya* means here the total abnegation of such inferior interests and not merely restraining one's natural inclinations. It thereby becomes much wider in its scope; but yet, as it does not altogether exclude the idea of an end in which the agent is interested, feeling will continue to have a place in the conduct of this stage also.

It is necessary to dwell a little longer on the nature of this ideal for it may appear that, though it does not abolish all interest, the type of conduct (if we are to understand from it 'moral conduct') which it signifies is anything but the best from the ethical standpoint. The Gītā teaching applies to all kinds of deeds—self-regarding as well as other-regarding; and the result of doing the latter also for the sake of *sattva-śuddhi* will be to transfer the attention of the moral agent from their legitimate objects, viz., the persons and institutions whose interests they are intended to serve. Nobody questions the importance of subjective purification in a scheme of moral discipline, but the result of aiming at it in the Gītā manner seems to exclude the

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., com. on the Gītā, iii. 1. *Vihitasya karaṇākaraṇayoh duḥkha-mātra-phala*.



social aim which is essential to all true ethical conduct. It diverts the attention of the moral agent from others and concentrates it on his own betterment. In fact, the emphasis on the individual is a common charge brought against Hindu ethics in general and advaitic ethics in particular. In answering this objection it should be admitted that the Gītā ideal does dismiss the social aim. But the dismissal of the social *aim*, we should add, does not mean the dismissal of the social *view* for, though the welfare of society as such ceases to motivate action, it is not excluded from the agent's mind. This is clear from the emphasis laid on *sva-dharma* in the Gītā. Its teaching, as we all know, insists not only on acting without any desire for fruit in the sense explained above, but also on the performance of one's own duties, i.e., duties of one's station in society.<sup>1</sup> It is explicitly stated<sup>2</sup> that their intrinsic character is of no consequence, and that it is their social significance that alone matters. Since it is the fulfilment, at all hazards, of these duties on which the Gītā insists, it cannot be regarded as separating the individual from society. It is true that doing everything for self-betterment implies that all altruistic deeds are reduced to the level of a means instead of being regarded as ends in themselves. But that does not make the activity less objective. This aspect of the teaching becomes clear when we remember the alternative phrase used by Śaṅkara for *sattva-śuddhi*, viz., *Īśvarārtham* ('for the sake of God') which represents these duties as what one owes to God rather than to oneself. The training seems, no doubt, to care only for the agent, but it does not really ignore the gain that should accrue to society by one's membership of it. Its aim is not so much to take him away from society as beyond it. The fact is that, according to the Gītā, social and individual ends cannot be completely reconciled; and the attempt made to adjust them in the previous stage can, at best, result only in a sort of working compromise. It is with the purpose of removing the very possibility of collision between them that the Gītā substitutes for the dual motive of the earlier stage the single one of self-culture, purging it at the same time of all taint that may arise from the simultaneous pursuit of material and such other lower interests.

<sup>1</sup> See Śaṅkara's com. on ii. 31.

<sup>2</sup> iii. 35.

## II

The main aim in the second stage is to know the ultimate reality; and its knowledge, as we shall see, will further alter the significance of detachment. The person that enters upon this stage, as we stated before, already possesses this knowledge (*viveka*), but it is mediate and will just suffice to indicate in a general way the direction in which advance is to be made for knowing that reality immediately. His present purpose is to achieve this end. In order that he may accomplish it the better, he assumes *saṁnyāsa* which, like the other *āśramas* has its own duties, so that the practical part of the discipline does not come to an end with its assumption. This stage again consists of two parts—one in which the disciple is striving to realise his purpose (*vividiṣā-saṁnyāsa*), and the other in which he has succeeded in doing so (*vidvat-saṁnyāsa*); and we shall consider each separately:

(1) In regard to the former, we should first point out that the adoption of *saṁnyāsa* means taking a vow of non-injury (*abhaya*)—a fact which shows that the Vedāntic disciple cannot grow oblivious of his environment, by which term we have to understand not merely human society but the whole of living creation including the meanest thing that feels. But it may be thought that, though he may not ignore the existence of others, his attitude towards them is purely negative and does not signify any positive striving for their sake. Even in the pessimistic schools of India which consider aloofness, or the isolation of the self from everything else, to be the ideal, the life of the saint is far from being self-centred; but, however that may be, it is certainly not so in Advaita. The best proof of it is found in the conception of Brahman, or the ultimate reality to be realised here, as *ānanda* or bliss. Since the Upaniṣads look upon all distinction as the source of pain,<sup>1</sup> this conception implies the oneness of Brahman with the whole of existence. It is this oneness then which the disciple should now discover through his own experience, if he is to realise the highest reality; and he cannot obviously do so by neglecting others. This shows that his attitude towards the environment cannot be negative. On the other hand, it necessitates the cultivation of universal

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Br. Up.* I. iv. 2. *Dvītyādvai bhayaṁ bhavati.*

love,<sup>1</sup> not in the sense of love for others *as others* but *as oneself*. 'He that sees all beings in himself and himself in all beings—he will not turn away from them.'<sup>2</sup> *Vairāgya*, reaches its highest form here, and means the complete annihilation of egoistic interests implied in such love. That is, the aim here is not, as in the earlier stage, merely to seek for oneself an end which cannot come into conflict with that of others, but to transcend the very distinction between the self and the not-self. It may appear that the transcendence of this distinction, by eliminating all interests, will lead to the elimination of feeling from any conduct that may characterise the disciple thereafter. Such an objection can apply only to the culminating phase of the training, which we shall presently consider. So far as its other phases are concerned, the disciple is aware of himself as pursuing an end, and he therefore necessarily feels interested in it.

(2) In none of the stages of discipline so far considered, whose common aim is to further the growth of detachment, is the kind of life, which the advaitic disciple leads, bereft of either altruistic activity or feeling. We have now to deal with the last phase of fruition or *jīvanmukti* where that detachment has become perfect. Here, however, we can take into account only the *vyutthāna* or waking phase, for the other, viz., that of *samādhi* or trance is exactly like *videha-mukti* whose conception is eschatological. The latter is, no doubt, in strictness the final goal; but we are not concerned here with it, because it admittedly lies not only beyond the notions of right and wrong but also beyond all activity. There is not much to be stated in respect of this phase. The conduct of the previous phase here becomes spontaneous.<sup>3</sup> That is, *vividiṣā-saṁnyāsa* is transformed into *vidvatsaṁnyāsa* or aspiration is replaced by achievement. One that has reached this state, the ideal stage, knows neither preferences nor exclusions; and everything is equally sacred to him—whether it be, in the words of the *Gītā*, 'a cow or elephant or dog, the cultured Brahmin or the outcaste that feeds on dogs.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The renunciation, signified by *saṁnyāsa*, refers only to the duties that are specific to the householder's state.

<sup>2</sup> *Iśa. Up.* 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, iv. 69.

<sup>4</sup> v. 18.

He now ceases to belong to any class or order and becomes a citizen of the universe, as we might put it. The moral striving which marks the lower stages is once for all left behind;<sup>1</sup> but the elimination of strife does not mean the elimination of activity as is abundantly shown, for example, by the kind of life that Śaṅkara himself led. Fruition does not mean rest.<sup>2</sup> The activity, no doubt, is not directed towards any personal end because in attaining Brahman the sage has attained all. *Āptakāmasya kā sprhā*. But still it cannot be regarded as divorced from feeling, for it is inspired by his equal love for all, or his interest in the whole.<sup>3</sup> The activity is, in fact, the concrete expression of that love. We may, if we like, suppose that it involves self-interest also; only we should then bear in mind that it is not the egoistic, but the true or universal self that is meant. *Vairāgya* does not accordingly mean the abolition of interests but only the extinction of narrow egoism. Hence the present stage, like the previous ones is not bereft of either activity or feeling. But both of them come to have a new meaning by reason of the complete knowledge that has been attained. The one becomes wholly impersonal, and the other is transformed into cosmic love.

### III

It is time now to recur to the question alluded to in the beginning, viz., whether feeling, in any other sense, is involved in conduct. Broadly speaking, Indian thinkers conceive of the standard of moral judgment in two different ways. Some Mimāṃsakas, viz., the followers of Prabhākara, look upon it as a law which demands implicit obedience, while all the remaining schools of thought, including the Bhāṭṭas, take it as an end whose realisation is regarded as desirable. The advaitin adopts the latter view and describes the end as *iṣṭa* or what is desired by the agent. And since, according to him, the only object of desire is pleasure (or the avoidance of pain),

<sup>1</sup> *Vedānta-sūtra*, IV. i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> See Vidyāranya's comment upon the expression *udāsīnavat* occurring in *Gītā*, ix. 9 and xiv. 23: *Pañcadaśī*, vi. 272 ff. Cf. *Ibid.* vii. 130. See also *Gītā*, iv. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Gītā*, iv. 24.

it alone constitutes the end of all purposeful activity.<sup>1</sup> Hence, according to the Advaita, feeling has a bearing on conduct not only in the sense of interest as implied in the conscious pursuit of an end, but also in that of pleasure as constituting that end. In other words, feeling is both an efficient cause of conduct and its final cause.

It will be objected that to represent pleasure as the goal of all conscious activity is to hark back to the hedonistic doctrine which has long been exploded by scientific psychology. But, seeing the remarkable measure of agreement that exists among Indian moralists on this point in spite of the ascetic outlook on life that prevails among them, it is difficult to believe that the theory is without a satisfactory explanation. Confining our attention to the Advaita, we may suggest the following interpretation. Pleasure is conceived here as a mode of the *antaḥ-karāṇa*; and, as no *antaḥ-karāṇa* is significant without reference to a particular *jīva*, it really stands for a state of the empirical self. Further, the pleasantness of such a state is in this doctrine, as distinguished from the Sāṅkhya for example, due to the nature of the self and not to that of the *antaḥ-karāṇa*. Consequently it seems that when pleasure is spoken of as the goal of all purposeful activity, we have to understand that what such activity aims at is the realisation of some state of the self. The goal is not therefore mere pleasure but a form or type of concrete experience of which pleasure or satisfaction is an invariable feature. The exact kind of experience which a person seeks at any time naturally depends upon his conception of the self at the time, or what comes to the same, upon his character. It is not possible, and it does not seem necessary, to consider this topic further here; but we should refer briefly to one point of importance before we close. If all purposeful activity alike points to 'pleasure' as its end, it may be asked what makes the difference between right and wrong action. In answering this question we have to remember that the satisfaction which can be realised on the empirical plane is notoriously unstable, and that there will sooner or later be a lapse from it. But when one rises above that plane

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, Chap. viii. Cf. also Śaṅkara's com. on *Gītā*, xiii. 2. *Rāgādi-doṣa-tantratvāt pravṛtतेḥ*.

and identifies oneself with all, it becomes final and lasting. It is this 'stable satisfaction' or abiding peace that is the ultimate goal of life, according to the Advaita; and it furnishes the criterion by which all conduct is to be judged. That conduct is moral which, by helping the conquest of the lower self in the manner described above, prepares the way for such peace; and that which hinders it is the reverse.<sup>1</sup> Moral conduct is thus only an aid to the attainment of the highest end which is beyond good and evil.

<sup>1</sup> The satisfaction which such activity yields is termed *preyas*, or the merely pleasant, to distinguish it from *freyas*, the final good. See *Kātha Up.* I. ii. 1-2.

## THE INDIAN CONCEPTION OF VALUES<sup>1</sup>

The subject of value is a very complicated one, and it may appear presumptuous on my part to have undertaken to say anything that is worth listening to about it; but I shall not enter into the intricacies of the subject. I have for long felt that Indian philosophy is essentially a philosophy of values; and all that I now attempt is to convey to you one or two ideas which have occurred to me in this connection. Without further preliminaries therefore, I shall begin by stating what I understand by the term 'value'. It seems to me that the meaning of this term can be best indicated by contrasting it with that of another, viz., 'fact'. The immediate purpose of all knowledge is to acquaint us with facts. If I look about me, I perceive some object or other. That is direct observation. I may also come to know of things indirectly as when I hear a distant sound and connect it with its possible source. The object seen directly or known indirectly is a fact. It need not signify a present existence, as these examples may suggest. It may be what existed in the past or what will exist in the future. It is not even necessary that it should be a matter of certainty; it is enough if it appears to be so. What is meant by 'fact' then, as used here, is simply anything that becomes the object of explicit consciousness. Such facts may well suffice for the purposes of a purely theoretic investigation; but in actual life their knowledge, as a rule, leads to action whose aim is the positive one of securing something we like or the negative one of avoiding something we dislike. Either way, knowledge lights up for us the path of action which we pursue in order that some desire of ours may be satisfied. It is this satisfaction of desire or attainment of ends as the result of knowing facts that is to be understood by 'value'. But the realisation of value in this sense (*iṣṭa*) generally implies the prior securing of some appropriate means; and these mediating factors (*iṣṭa-sādhana*) also are often described as values. It is however obvious that, as subserving ends other than themselves, they can be only instrumental and not intrinsic or ultimate values. Thus

<sup>1</sup> Paper read at the Bhandarkar O. R. Institute, Poona, on the occasion of the Twelfth Anniversary Day of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, on 9 September 1937.

money is an instrumental value, while the satisfaction of any of life's needs to which it is a means, is an intrinsic one. I shall have to do with both these kinds of value, and the particular context in which the term is used will, I hope, make it clear in which sense it is to be taken.

I have assumed that the realisation of value is preceded by a knowledge of it. This is in accordance with our philosophical texts which define it as 'that which, being known, is sought to be realised in one's own experience'.<sup>1</sup> Whether objects below the level of conscious being also seek values is a difficult question to decide. Some among modern as well as ancient writers have said that they do. A recent writer Prof. Laird, for instance, remarks that even such objects exhibit a partiality, or 'non-indifference' as he terms it, to some things as distinguished from others. A creeper twines round a tree near by and iron filings move towards the magnet, implying by their behaviour a certain preference to some objects rather than to others. And among ancient writers, Manu for example has stated that plants and trees have a sense of pain and pleasure.<sup>2</sup> This view may be right or it may be nothing more than poetic fancy such as inspired Kālidāsa to write his *Cloud Messenger* or Shelley, his *Sensitive Plant*. But it is not necessary for us to settle the point for I propose to confine my attention now to what are called *puruṣārthas* or 'human values', which signify that they are for a reflecting subject and thus exclude all reference not only to the sphere of infra-conscious being but also to all lower animals. The latter also, no doubt, strive to satisfy their desires like man; but they differ from him in that they do so without any *idea* of the satisfaction they are seeking. Animal activity may involve an end, but it does not proceed from a definite consciousness of that end. As the *Aitareyāranyaka* says: 'Among living beings, it is man alone that says what he has known, that sees what he has known. He knows the future, he knows this world and the next; and he desires to attain the immortal through the mortal. Thus is he endowed, while other creatures are aware of only hunger and thirst'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Siddhānta-muktāvalī*, st. 146 and *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Antaḥ-samjñā bhavāntyete sukha-duḥkha-samanvitāḥ*, i. 49.

<sup>3</sup> II. iii. 2.



The rough and ready manner in which I have stated the meaning of value raises many questions. Thus the statement that it is for a reflecting self may lead one to ask whether values have any objective reference or are purely subjective. We must leave unanswered such questions, however important they may be, and proceed with our immediate task of pointing out what is distinctive about the Indian conception of values. Since, according to our definition, whatever is the means of satisfying any of the needs felt by man is an instrumental value, the number of such values becomes almost infinite. But a little reflection will show that there is no certainty in regard to several among them that they will secure the end that is sought to be attained through them. What was successful once or in the case of one person may not be so at another time or in the case of another person. Secondly, even when the means prove successful, the satisfaction derived through them is only provisional in that it is sooner or later replaced by a desire for some other mode of satisfaction. Thus, as ordinarily known to us, the instrumental values are for the most part precarious (*anaikāntika*) and the intrinsic values are all unstable (*anātyantika*).<sup>1</sup> That is the irony of life, and it makes us ask whether there are any values that are not vitiated by these defects. The Indian answer to this question, to state it very broadly, is that there are two such values, viz., *dharma* and *mokṣa*. The other values are all brought under the heads of *artha* and *kāma*. These are the four well-known *puruṣārthas*—*artha*, *kāma*, *dharma*, and *mokṣa*.<sup>2</sup> We may call the former pair secular values, and the latter spiritual. When I say that Indian philosophy is one of values, I mean that it primarily deals with these *puruṣārthas* and that the consideration of metaphysical questions comes in only as a matter of course. Even among the values, it is directly concerned with the two higher ones of *dharma* and *mokṣa* and the right means of realising them; but, as it should also show how they are superior, it has necessarily, though only generally, to consider the nature of the other

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Sāṅkhya-kārikā*, st. 1.

<sup>2</sup> This list, though old and well-recognised, is not altogether satisfactory, for instrumental values are collocated in it with intrinsic ones. Thus *artha*, as generally understood, can only be a means while *mokṣa* is always conceived as an end.

two values. Hence we may define philosophy, as conceived in India, as a *criticism of values*. Other branches of learning also deal with select values; but the idea of preference or of better and worse is not, strictly speaking, involved in them.<sup>1</sup>

I have classed *dharma* and *mokṣa* together as spiritual values, but there is a great deal of difference between the two conceptions necessitating a separate treatment of them. I shall begin with *dharma* but, before explaining the different views held about it, I shall state what is to be understood by this term. Vātsyāyana in his commentary on an early *sūtra* of Gautama represents *dharma* as the result of right conduct. He says that virtues like charity, speaking the truth and compassion lead to it, and regards it as the means to some form of good.<sup>2</sup> We may thus take the word as standing for moral merit. But it must be admitted that this is not its usual meaning. More commonly, it is used with a wider significance as comprehending Vedic ritual or religious duties of one kind or another. But the point is that even when used in this wider sense, it necessarily includes ethical conduct on the principle, recognised from very early times, that the Vedas do not cleanse the morally impure.<sup>3</sup> Śaṅkara, for instance, has stated that nobody that is not virtuous is qualified to enter upon the ceremonial life.<sup>4</sup> *Dharma* may thus be more than virtue, but it is not less. I shall not therefore be misrepresenting its nature if, for my present purpose, I regard it as a moral concept roughly corresponding to the good as it is ordinarily understood in the West. I shall accordingly refer to it hereafter by its Indian name or by its Western equivalent as occasion may require.

Now the ethical aim, to state it generally, is on the one hand to put a check upon or, if we prefer to express it so, refine natural impulses which are for the most part selfish, and on the other to strive to the best of one's ability for securing the welfare of society. These features characterise *dharma* also. It comprehends first the cultivation of virtues like fortitude and temperance (*ātma-guṇa*)<sup>5</sup> which involve a good deal of self-restraint. Next,

<sup>1</sup> Where such an idea is present, the *vidyā* may be said to usurp the function of philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> I. i. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ācāra-hīnaṃ na punanti Vedāḥ*.—*Vasiṣṭha-dharma-sūtra*, vi. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Vedānta-sūtra*, III. i. 10.

<sup>5</sup> See *Gautama-dharma-sūtra*, viii. 20-3.

and for the most part, it consists of what are known as *varṇāśrama-dharmas* or duties which are conceived mainly, though not exclusively,<sup>1</sup> as social. Both of these are obligatory, and they are therefore termed *nitya-karmas*. The notion of *dharma*, however, is not exhausted by them, for it also includes *kāmya-karmas* which, as their name indicates, directly aim at securing the good of the agent himself, like rank and riches. Only these *karmas*, on account of the inclusion of certain forms of ritual in them, are sometimes conceived as yielding their result not in this life but in a future one. Whether the advantages sought are of this world or of another, it is indispensable that their seeking should not come into conflict with the essential objects of the moral life, viz., self-culture and social service. This conception of *dharma* as a means to the attainment of certain ends is exactly the one we find, for instance, in the *Mīmāṃsā* as taught by Kumāṛila. *Dharma*, be it understood as obligatory or optional, thus becomes an instrumental value and not an ultimate one.

But this is only one of the ways in which it is conceived by the Indians, and there are two others which we should consider now. It will be seen that, though by placing various restrictions on the exercise of natural impulses, the above view precludes the seeking of *kāma* in its crude sense of animal pleasure, it explains *dharma* on a utilitarian and therefore an ultimately hedonistic basis, since it makes its value depend upon the resulting well-being. Dissatisfied with this explanation, other thinkers, like Prabhākara, conceive of it in a different way. In their view, the idea of the *phala* or the result to be attained, irrespective of its being for oneself or for others, should be completely abandoned, and *dharma* should be regarded as an intrinsic value worthy of being pursued for its own sake. What ought to actuate man in pursuing it is the consciousness that it is his duty to do so, and never the prospect of satisfying any desire that he or others may have. *Dharma* accordingly becomes an ultimate value here and not merely an instrumental one as in the previous view. What is noteworthy is the total rejection of the hedonistic standpoint and the replacement of it by the principle of duty for duty's sake. If we overlook certain more or less important differences,

<sup>1</sup> Daily rites like *mahā-yajñas*, for instance, have in view the good of beings other than fellow-men.

this view of the good or of the right, as it is perhaps preferable to term it, corresponds in the history of Indian thought to the view of the 'categorical imperative' put forward by Kant in the West. What he states in respect of the good, viz., that 'it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favour of any inclination'<sup>1</sup> is exactly applicable to the present conception of *dharma*. This altered view of it has a very important implication: It shows that an instrumental value may, if one wills, be so pursued as to transform it into an intrinsic one. The way to do it is to mentally detach it from all its practical uses and concentrate one's efforts on realising it for its own sake. There is no question that this turning away from the ordinary secular purposes to the fulfilment of which our activities are commonly directed is to greatly elevate them; and so far, we may regard this theory of *dharma* as higher than the previous one. But there is one serious defect in it. In commending disinterested activity in the literal sense of the expression, it is indulging in a pure abstraction, for action entirely divorced from purpose is a psychological impossibility. To insist upon such activity in the name of *dharma* is, as Śaṅkara observes, to reduce life to a form of meaningless drudgery.<sup>2</sup> Considerations of this kind have led to the formulation of a third view which, as being Vedāntic, may be looked upon as containing the highest conception of *dharma* according to ancient Indians. It represents a further revaluation of *dharma* by making it subserve what is known as *mokṣa*. Our actions are not here emptied of all motive as in the previous view; only the *diverse* purposes of the duties that fall to us as men are replaced by *one and the same* end of helping the attainment of *mokṣa*. *Dharma* thus assumes the *role* of an instrumental value once again, but it is instrumental not to the realisation of any secular ends, however purely they may be conceived, but for achieving what is regarded as the supreme spiritual ideal.

But what is the nature of this ideal to which *dharma* is to be subordinated? The conception of *mokṣa* differs widely in the different schools; but all of them represent it as the highest of

<sup>1</sup> T. K. Abbott: *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> See com. on *Gītā*, iii. 1.

human values. The significance of representing it so, according to our criterion of the highest value, is that there should be no lapse from it when it is once attained. That is, it should be eternal (*nitya*). It should also be absolute in the sense that it can never become the means to any other end (*phala*). We need not dwell on the distinctions in the nature of *mokṣa* as conceived in the several schools. It will do for us to regard it as standing for peace of spirit which it finally purports to be according to all of them. This value is intimately connected with Truth or knowledge of ultimate reality, since the acquisition of such knowledge is regarded as a necessary preliminary to its attainment. Truth thus becomes a means and not an end. This is clear, so far as the Vedānta is concerned, from the description of the knowledge of ultimate reality as a path or *panthāḥ* in the Upaniṣads.<sup>1</sup> That the same is also the view of thinkers other than Vedāntins may be indicated by citing the opinion of the exponents of other systems. In the *Nyāya-sūtra*, for example, we read that *mokṣa* results from knowing the true nature of reality.<sup>2</sup> The *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* again speaks of the destruction of the threefold misery (*duḥkṣa-traya*) as the consequence of knowing what the system takes to be the ultimate nature of the universe.<sup>3</sup> That is, Indian philosophy does not stop short at the discovery of truth but utilises it for attaining something else which it holds to be more valuable. But it will be said that such a view removes Truth from the high pedestal which it occupies as an ultimate value according to Western conceptions. Thinkers like Bradley are positive that philosophy aims only at Truth. He writes: 'It seeks to gain possession of Reality but only in an ideal form.'<sup>4</sup> Another modern writer states that 'its mission terminates in the quest, rather than any actions that may follow from it.'<sup>5</sup> Now the seeking of ultimate truth may have its own secular or worldly attractions. It may, for instance, be sought for the sake of the fame it may bring. By diverting it from all such aims and pursuing it for its own sake, Truth, it may be admitted, can be

<sup>1</sup> *Svetāśvatara Up.* iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Tottoa-jñānāt nistreyasādhigamaḥ.* (I. i. 1).

<sup>3</sup> *Duḥkṣa-trayābhigātāt jijñāsā.* (st. 1).

<sup>4</sup> *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> J. S. Mackenzie: *Ultimate Values*, p. 26.

transformed, like *dharma* in the Prābhākara school, into an end in itself. But that seems to make philosophy the same as science, the only difference being that while the special sciences deal each with some one particular aspect of reality, philosophy is concerned with the whole of it. There is indeed a tendency to identify the two in the West, doubtless, as a result of the rapid growth of experimental science in the last few centuries. But considering the general nature of knowledge, it seems that its ultimate significance should be practical. Our minds, psychologists tell us, are through and through conational, and cannot therefore rest in mere cognition.

In thus differentiating philosophy from science, however, I do not imply that their subject-matter is necessarily distinct. We may grant, for the moment, that philosophy aims at nothing more than the co-ordination or the integration of the results of science. But this does not eliminate the difference between the two, for the impulses which they satisfy are entirely different. Science gratifies curiosity or wonder, if we prefer to put it so; but philosophy is meant to meet the deepest desire of man for peace of soul. In a beautiful poem, George Herbert says that God in creating man endowed him with all possible gifts—strength, beauty, wisdom, honour and pleasure; but in the end refrained from adding to them the great gift of rest, saying—

‘Yet let him keep the rest,  
But keep them with repining restlessness;  
Let him be rich and weary, that at least  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast.’

It is this restlessness, consequent upon not merely intellectual doubts but also the sorrows and sufferings of life, which is the true cause of man’s philosophic quest. Or, to state the same from the standpoint of the present poem, this unrest is part of a divine scheme which is intended to make man turn to God where alone he can find abiding peace. Philosophy is not therefore ‘a game of speculation’, as it has been described, meant only to afford intellectual satisfaction by dispelling doubts, but a practical study which should issue in the right mode of life. Its aim is not merely to unravel the mystery of existence but

to discover a way out of the misery of life as indicated, for instance, by Buddha's noble saying that he would willingly bear the burden of everybody's suffering, if he could bring relief to the world.<sup>1</sup>

If we grant that the object of philosophy is to help us out of this radical unrest of life, we shall understand the significance of subordinating *dharma* to *mokṣa*. All our activities, indeed, seem to be directed towards this object; but we fail to attain it for, owing to our ignorance of the ultimate truth, we act on selfish or short-sighted views. Our belief, however, in the correctness of these views is immediate. Now it is a matter of common experience that if belief which is based upon immediate convictions is to be effectively removed, the knowledge of its contrary must become equally immediate. The knowledge of ultimate reality which speculative philosophy aims at, being merely a theoretical construction, is necessarily mediate. It may remove doubt, but it is powerless to influence conduct until it has been transformed into immediate knowledge. It is only when such immediacy is achieved and the truth, of which we are intellectually convinced, is seen mirrored in our own experience, that our old convictions disappear and our attitude towards life is set right. Till then we shall continue in the course to which we are accustomed. It is for converting mediate philosophic knowledge into an immediate experience that the Indian systems recommend the adoption of some definite course of practical discipline. To connect practical training in this manner with philosophy, it may appear, is to lose sight of the distinction between it and religion. But we must remember that the training is not for securing any end externally imposed upon us; it is only for transforming into an inner conviction the mediate knowledge of ultimate reality which has already received our intellectual assent. Hence there is nothing authoritarian about it; and if philosophy thereby seems to become blended with religion, it is not in the sense of any dogma. We cannot dwell at any length on the details of this discipline. It will suffice to remark that it consists of two parts—one for securing detachment from all personal interests (*vairāgya*) and the other for cultivating

<sup>1</sup> *Kali-kaluṣa-kṛtāni yāni loke mayi nipatantu vimucyātām hi lokah*. See Kumārila's *Tantra-vārttika*, I. ii. 1.

powers of mental concentration (*yoga*). And it is chiefly as an aid to the former side of the discipline, viz., the elimination of selfish impulses, that *dharma* is to be utilised in the last of the three views referred to above. The way in which it contributes to this result is quite familiar through the teaching of the *Gītā* and does not require much explanation. Briefly it is that the pursuit of *dharma* in the spirit of this teaching, or *niṣkāma-karma* as it is called, will enable us to inwardly assimilate ultimate truth by destroying our narrow views which, as stated above, form the chief obstacle to our doing so.

But there is one aspect of this teaching to which I like to refer in passing. In all moral activities there is a distinction between quality and content. One and the same kind of action may be done in two or more ways which differ in their moral quality. Similarly, the moral quality may remain the same in diverse acts though their content be different. The result of subordinating the good to *mokṣa* is to elevate the moral quality of actions above their subject-matter. Thus the work in which Arjuna engages himself as a result of the *Gītā* teaching is stupendous in its magnitude, being no less than setting right the world which is running off the rails. The actions, which ordinary people like ourselves have to perform bears no comparison to it. While the one, for instance, would count for much in a historical estimate, the other would be nowhere. Yet, as a way of approach to *mokṣa*, the two do not differ in the least. 'All service ranks the same with God'. This is the significance of the famous principle enunciated in the *Gītā* that one's own duty, be it never so low, is superior to another's, a principle which has been accepted by all the orthodox schools and whose knowledge has filtered down even to the lowest ranks of our society as suggested, for instance, by the words which Kālidāsa puts into the mouth of the fisherman in the *Sākuntalam*.<sup>1</sup> It should not be inferred from this elevation of the moral quality of an action above its content that the latter remains unregulated, for that would put an end to all social order whose maintenance, though not overtly emphasised, is one of the main objects of *dharma*. There is, as indicated by the term *sva-dharma*, a rule governing the content

<sup>1</sup> vi. 2.



also, viz., that each person should do the duty of his station in society.

I have so far spoken only of the good and the true out of the famous triad of values commonly recognised in the West; and it is necessary to add a few words regarding the third of them, viz., the beautiful, to complete my treatment of values. Of these, the true is the same in both the schemes of values, although Indians look upon it as an instrumental and not an ultimate value, and *dharma*, you will remember, I have taken as roughly corresponding to the good. As regards the beautiful, however, we come across a rather strange fact, for it is not recognised at all by Indian philosophers. The only reference to it we can trace in their works is when they are illustrating their philosophic doctrine. In the *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* for example, Prakṛti is compared to a dancer who retires from the stage when she has played her part.<sup>1</sup> In the *Pañca-daśī*, in a similar way, painting as well as the drama, is made use of in the exposition of Advaita.<sup>2</sup> Otherwise Indian philosophers are entirely silent about this value; and the statement that 'all prattle about poetry ought to cease,'<sup>3</sup> though it refers to only one of the fine arts, represents their attitude towards all of them. And in this, they took much the same view as Plato seems to have done in ancient Greece. That this over-Puritanic view of art was not of late origin is shown by Manu's reckoning of song, dance and instrumental music (*tauryatrikaṃ*) among human weaknesses (*vyasana*).<sup>4</sup> The same also seems to be the import of the curse which, in the epilogue to the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, is stated to have been pronounced on dancing. In other words, aesthetic pleasure on this view is not one of the higher values at all but only *kāma* or sensuous pleasure in disguise.

But this does not mean that the value of Beauty was not felt at all by Indians, for there were other groups of thinkers, neither less ancient nor less influential, who explored its nature and pointed out its exalted character. Bharata speaks of his work, which may be characterised as an encyclopaedia of nearly all the fine arts, as the 'fifth Veda'.<sup>5</sup> We may also mention in this connection the numerous *ālaṃkārikas* or writers on poetics for, though they only speak of poetry and the drama, they imply a

<sup>1</sup> St. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. vi. and x.

<sup>3</sup> *Kāvya-lāpaṃ ca varjayet.*

<sup>4</sup> vii. 47.

<sup>5</sup> i. 12.

general theory of art. This altered view of art, broadly speaking, appears in two forms so that we have three different views in all here, as in the case of *dharma*.

(i) The first and the earlier which is advocated by writers like Bhāmaha is that the beautiful, being the source of pure delight, is far from reprehensible.<sup>1</sup> Vāmana, for example, referring to poetry and the drama, states that they are quite worthy of our regard (*grāhya*) owing to the beauty of their form as well as of content.<sup>2</sup> Kālidāsa makes the dancing-master in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*<sup>3</sup> say that the high esteem in which he holds his art is on account of its intrinsic merit, not because he professes it; and among the reasons given for such preference is the universality of its appeal, which shows that it is not to be regarded as merely subjective in its character. That is, even if art be *kāma*, as its critics say, it is *kāma* idealised and sublimated so that its selfish and sensual side is entirely eliminated.

(ii) This view of art for art's sake, as we may term it, is however, not the final verdict of the Indian mind on it, for we find it profoundly transformed, as in the case of *dharma*, by another and somewhat later school of thinkers who represent it as the means essentially of experiencing *rasa* or aesthetic ecstasy, comparing it at the same time to the ineffable peace of *mokṣa*.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the exposition of this view in the many works of this school, there is also the old saying that it is only the fortunate that can taste *rasa*, for it is so much like *yogic* experience. The idea of *rasānubhava*<sup>5</sup> as the aesthetic aim is, no doubt, very old; but, to judge from the way in which it is mentioned in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*,<sup>6</sup> it seems to have been regarded at that time as its own justification. But in this later view its value comes to be

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bhāmaha: *Prītim karoti kīrtim ca sādhu-kāvya-nibandhanam* (i. 2). This refers to poetic or, more generally, artistic creation; but the same, as sometimes cited by others, applies to artistic appreciation also. See e.g., *Dharmayāloka*, p. 12 (com.).

<sup>2</sup> I. i. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> i. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Para-brahmāvāda-sabrahma-cāritam*.

<sup>5</sup> *Puṣyavantaḥ pramīṣvanti yogivat rasa-santatim*: quoted in *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, iii.

<sup>6</sup> vi. 32-3. The statement *Raso vai saḥ* occurring in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* is sometimes cited in support of the antiquity of this view. But there is nothing in the context to show its connection with *rasa* as aesthetic experience. See e.g., Śaṅkara's com.

assessed by a standard accepted by philosophers as the highest. Like the good then, it finally becomes related in the Indian view to the highest ideal of man. But there is an important difference in the manner of its relation which requires a few words of explanation.

It is common knowledge that the fine arts of dancing, architecture, painting and sculpture have been affiliated in India, as in many other countries, to religion and therefore in a way to philosophy also. Even poetry is so, as shown by what may be described as the 'poetry of piety' which comprises hymns and *stotras* too numerous to mention. But I do not mean by the relation of art to philosophy this kind of subordination through its subject-matter. That is only to utilise art for making religion and philosophy more attractive; and it justifies the claim put forward by Bharata,<sup>1</sup> and reiterated by others, that no subject is beyond the reach of art. What I mean is the recognition that, quite apart from its theme, art by virtue of its form as art can be of use to the spiritual aspirant. It will be remembered that the practical discipline, required for transforming the mediate knowledge of ultimate truth into an immediate experience, comprises not only the cultivation of unselfish habits but also the practice of contemplation. Art also, like *niṣkāma-karma*, may, by purging our emotions, help what I have described as the inner assimilation of the ultimate truth, for devotion to the beautiful is not less unselfish than devotion to the good. It is however, specially fitted to assist the latter or contemplative side of the discipline; and it is as such that one of the arts, music, appears to be recommended in the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*.<sup>2</sup> Art may, indeed, be characterised as the layman's *yoga*, for the spell which it casts on one's mind is so complete. But over and above this direct help, there is another which it can indirectly render. By the attitude of detachment which it evokes, it gives man a foretaste, albeit momentary, of the supreme peace which, according to all the Indian systems, should be the aim of man to secure. Satisfying thus the same impulse, art becomes a sample or pattern of *mokṣa*; and a mind that is continually nourished upon it, if sufficiently earnest, may easily feel itself drawn towards that higher end.

<sup>1</sup> i. 113-4.

<sup>2</sup> iii. 114.

Thus, according to the Indian view, all the three so-called eternal values are subsidiary to one and the same end of *mokṣa*.<sup>1</sup> Of these, the beautiful may not be a necessary aid like the other two, but it still forms a desirable approach to it. And here we come upon another point in which the Indian view diverges from the generality of European views. These three values, no doubt are vastly superior to all others which are infected with one form or other of self-interest; but they are far from being supreme or absolute. In fact, it seems hard to understand how more than one value can be absolute. It is as a result of the conflicts and perplexities of life that we come to cherish these values; but none of them is adequate by itself to take us finally beyond them. They certainly reveal to us the nature of the ultimate goal, but they do so only dimly and partially. We have explained the reason why the pursuit of truth for its own sake cannot be a supreme value. It is mediate and cannot therefore effectively supplant our first and intimate convictions regarding the world in which we find ourselves placed. The chief reason for the relative inferiority of the other two values is that their successful pursuit does not, as a matter of course, require a knowledge of ultimate truth. That is, their realisation is not incompatible with ignorance of the final philosophic truth. There should be instances within the experience of us all where goodness does not necessarily mean philosophic enlightenment. Similarly in the case of the beautiful also. The enjoyment of fine music or the appreciation of a good poem may require much intellectual culture but by no means does it need a knowledge of the ultimate truth also. In the case of beauty there is another deficiency also since the peace or poise of mind which it brings to its votaries, though comparable in its quality to the peace of spirit signified by *mokṣa*, is, as already remarked, transient and cannot therefore be the highest value. But it is quite permissible to pursue them even for their own sake for they are, unlike the other values, free from every taint of self-interest. The highest service they can render, however, is as handmaids to *mokṣa*. That is the central teaching of ancient India regarding values.

There is one other point to which a brief reference is neces-

<sup>1</sup> This is the significance of the Gītā statement, *Adhyātma-vidyā vidyānām* (x. 32) where Śaṅkara understands *mokṣa-vidyā* from *adhyātma-vidyā*.

sary. The way in which the final goal of *mokṣa* is conceived as eternal and all-satisfying, may make one think that it is a mere idea which has been elevated to the rank of an ideal: and it may lead to the question whether it at all admits of realisation. The answer of Indian philosophers is that it can undoubtedly be realised. All of them, including the heterodox, believe that ignorance carries within itself the seeds of its destruction, and that it is bound to be superseded by Truth for which, as an old Buddhistic verse has it, 'the human mind has a partiality'.<sup>1</sup> And we may deduce as a corollary from it that evil also, which is a consequence of wrong knowledge, must fall away in the end leaving man free.<sup>2</sup> That is, even systems not recognising God as a benevolent controller, believe that the scheme of things is favourable to the realisation of the supreme value. But there is one distinction: Some Indian thinkers admit *jīvanmukti*, which means that the goal of life can be reached here on this earth; others do not recognise it and so make it realisable hereafter—in a future existence. If I may conclude by expressing a personal opinion, the question whether the highest value is attainable is not of much consequence. We may grant that it is not finally attained and that man's reach will always exceed his grasp. What really matters is the deliberate choosing of it as the ideal to be pursued, and thereafter making a persistent and continual advance towards it.

<sup>1</sup> 'Nirupadrava-bhūtārtha-svabhāvasya viparyayāt |

Na bādho'yanavato'pi buddhestat-pakṣa-pātataḥ'—quoted by Vācaspati in his *Sāṅkhya-tattva-kaumudī*, st. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Medhātithi on *Manu-smṛti*, ii. 1: *Na hi vyāmoho yuga-sahasānuvartī*.

## THE MESSAGE OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY \*

The subject that I have selected for the address, which it is customary to deliver on such an occasion, possesses little technical importance. It is the old and familiar theme of the ideal of life; only I deal with it here from the Indian standpoint. I trust that what I say will be found to be of some interest to all, and not merely to those who are conversant with Indian philosophy.

One of the most striking features of Indian thought is its many-sidedness. It includes all possible types of solutions of the chief problems of philosophy. We have monism and pluralism, idealism and realism of diverse shades represented in it. What is yet more noteworthy is that this variety, which characterises Indian philosophy as a whole, appears over again in more than one system. Thus when Buddhism came to be taught, it soon split up in much the same fashion, giving rise to various kinds of realistic and idealistic views within it. History repeated itself when still later the Vedānta emerged in its classical form, and became divided into several schools. Many of these doctrines have disappeared in the course of the long and chequered history of Indian thought, but even those that have come down to our time are sufficient to illustrate the wide variety of its forms. It may be that such speculative diversity redounds greatly to the credit of the Indian mind. I propose, however, to dwell at present not on that side of the subject, but rather on the element of unity which is found to run through all this diversity. That these systems are not altogether heterogeneous and admit of being unified is by no means a new idea. It was held by the old Indian thinkers themselves, and they tried in more than one way to reconcile the differences among them.<sup>1</sup> But those reconciliations were generally effected from a theoretical standpoint. There is, however, one view among them which, though neither so fully worked out nor so familiar, is of a different kind; and my present purpose is to draw attention to it.

\* Address of the General President at the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Hyderabad (Deccan) in December 1939.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., *Nyāya-mañjari*, pp. 267-72. Jainism also, in its *Syādvāda*, may be said to have attempted a kind of synthesis of the various doctrines.

It is well known that the West has for long believed that philosophy aims at satisfying the impulse of curiosity or the desire to know. To judge from the attitude towards the universe revealed in the earliest of the philosophic hymns found in the Veda, the first efforts at philosophising in India also seem to have been directed to the same end. But soon this interest in mere speculation ceased, and philosophic truth came to be sought mainly for the light which it might throw upon the ultimate significance of life. This practical interest has, as it is now well recognised, ever since been the distinguishing feature of Indian philosophy. The remarkable unanimity in this respect among the various systems shows that the aim of Indian philosophy, as a whole, is to determine the ideal of practical life rather than merely to formulate a set of theoretical views of the universe.<sup>1</sup> And since this ideal, so far as it is realisable in the present life, is, as I shall try to point out, essentially the same according to the several systems, its inculcation may be regarded as the element which is common to them all. To the modern student, who has been nursed in the belief that philosophy is 'the child of wonder', such close linking together of theory and practice may appear to hinder the proper investigation of philosophical questions by importing notions like those of good and evil, higher and lower, which are, in his opinion, irrelevant to it. Whether or not it has proved a hindrance in the present case does not really concern us now, for I am speaking of the lesson of Indian philosophy as we find it; and it is not therefore necessary to enter into a discussion of the correctness of the standpoint which it has adopted. Besides, any attempt to do so will take us too far away from our subject. So I shall proceed to state what I consider to be the common features of the ideal of life which the Indian systems generally have in view.

The first and foremost of these features is unselfishness. Sureśvara, whose place in the history of Vedāntic monism is next only to that of Śaṅkara, states that it characterises the ideal of practical life according to not only the Vedic but also the non-Vedic systems.<sup>2</sup> And he adds that one of the latter, viz., Buddhism denies the very existence of the self in order to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Āgamānām virodho'pi nātīva vidyate furuṣārthe sarveṣām avirodhāt. Nyāya-mañjorī*, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. Vārtika*, pp. 513-5.

impress on the minds of its adherents the importance of this feature. If the belief in a persisting self were false, it is obvious that all selfish activity would become utterly meaningless. Thus the Buddhistic doctrine of 'no self' (*nairātmya-vāda*), according to Sureśvara is, what is termed 'a fiction of ethical value'. Other schools may not have pushed their metaphysical views so far as Buddhism; but they do not, in the least, lag behind it in the emphasis they lay upon this feature of the ideal. But we must remember that by unselfishness here is to be understood the *entire* abnegation of self-interest. An ancient law-giver,<sup>1</sup> who belongs to the pre-Christian period, defines a cultured person (*śiṣṭa*) as one whose heart is free from all personal desires. That is also the implication of the exalted place which the orthodox and the unorthodox schools alike assign to *saṁnyāsa*. The merits of detachment are not unknown to doctrines propounded elsewhere, and all of them teach it with equal fervour. Even the idea of complete or absolute self-denial is not foreign to some of them. A witty bishop, in speaking to children, is stated to have asked 'What is the Cross?' and answered it himself by saying 'It is the 'I' crossed out'. But the uniqueness of the Indian view consists in the special emphasis placed upon such self-denial.

This emphasis on the total exclusion of self-interest may suggest that it is a purely ascetic ideal which is here held up before the aspirant—an ideal which is negative and means a voluntary forsaking of the world. That, indeed, is now the prevalent belief regarding the Indian view of life. There is no doubt that the ideal is ascetic; but, according to most of the schools, it is so in a positive and not in a negative sense. By 'positive asceticism', I mean such asceticism as goes hand in hand with altruistic activity and is never divorced from it. That is, the aim of life is not mere detachment, but detachment and service. We have here a second feature of the common Indian ideal, viz., service, which shows that the pursuit of it does not mean running away from society and seeking passive isolation. Man's temptation, according to it, is not the world; rather his temptation, to put it compendiously, is the flesh. In other

<sup>1</sup> Vasiṣṭha—See his *Dharma-sūtra*, (i. 6) *Śiṣṭaḥ punarakhātmā*. Cf. also Āpastamba: *Dharma-sūtra*, I. xx. 1-4.



words, what is commended here is self-renunciation and not world-renunciation; and the common belief that the Indian ideal is mostly negative is not in accord with the prevailing spirit of Indian teaching. The greatest warrant for this conclusion is found in the *Gītā* which all orthodox systems, without any exception, reckon as a scripture of the highest authority. It insists upon the necessity of leading a life of incessant activity, although one may have no object to attain thereby for oneself. Life without action, it reckons, as almost a sin. The divine teacher here, who is necessarily also the exemplar of the teaching he imparts, says 'There is nothing in the three worlds which I have to toil for; and yet I act'.<sup>1</sup> The influence of this teaching is, in all probability, to be traced even outside orthodox thought as, for example, in the Bodhisattva conception of later Buddhism, according to which, Buddhahood, the very pinnacle of human aspiration, is sought because of the fitness it secures for rendering true service to others.

It may appear from what I have stated that renunciation and service are separate aims, which are to be pursued independently. But it is really not so, for they are conceived as standing in an intimate and vital relation to each other. Service is not regarded here as a mere concomitant of renunciation, but the very means of cultivating it. Consequently the aim is not renunciation *and* service, but renunciation *through* service.<sup>2</sup> It means that true detachment cannot be achieved, except by living an active life in the midst of others and devoting oneself to their welfare; only the activities, which such a life signifies, should be carried on without the least thought of advantage to oneself, if they should lead to complete detachment. As active service then, the discipline involves self-affirmation; and as tending to complete detachment, it also involves self-denial. The excellence of the teaching is in bringing these opposites into harmony; and it is able to do so by purifying the one of egoism

<sup>1</sup> iii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Here a few Indian doctrines differ. They teach that social service is not essential to the cultivation of renunciation, but that renunciation is a necessary precondition of all true service. Though the preliminary discipline thus becomes negative, it does not signify indifference to others as shown e.g., by the rule of *ahimsā* which is binding on all ascetics, no matter to what school they belong.

and the other of passivity or inaction. But these activities are not left to be determined by the choice or opinion of the individual, for the service which is to be the means of cultivating the spirit of renunciation is defined as consisting in the doing of *sva-dharma* or the duties of the station which one fills in society.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing, indeed, in the view precluding a person from engaging himself in any altruistic activity he may like; but the point is that, under all circumstances, he should perform his own immediate duties first. This insistence on the performance of one's own duties implies the abolition of all distinctions of high and low among them for, when we consider duties as means to renunciation, it is not their content that matters, but the selfless spirit in which they are done. All can therefore be *saṁnyāsins* in this sense, because all have their places in society and the duties pertaining to them. Accordingly, we find the *Mahābhārata* representing as a pattern of true asceticism a pedlar who fulfils his functions in society conscientiously and with absolute disinterestedness.<sup>2</sup>

Renunciation and service, however, are not the only features of the ideal. There is a third feature also; but before specifying it, it is desirable to find out in what respect the above training, which is meant to further the moral life, is incomplete. A great deal will, no doubt, be gained by a person that goes through this discipline; but, though he may thereby be able to renounce all self-interest, he will continue to be aware of his agency. To state the same in the terminology of the *Gītā*, though he may free himself from the idea that he is an enjoyer (*bhoktr*), he will remain conscious that he is a doer (*kartr*).<sup>3</sup> Such self-consciousness is, indeed, necessary inasmuch as the disciple in this stage sets before himself a definite purpose, viz., the overcoming of selfishness through performing his duty. But all such activity, by its very character, involves the possibility of an internal constraint or strife within the self. Disinterested activity, even when it is the result of strife, may be quite commendable; but it cannot be regarded as the ultimate ideal. The need for

<sup>1</sup> The conception of *sva-dharma* is wider than that of 'my station and its duties.' It includes the cultivation of self-regarding virtues also like humility and fortitude. But, for the sake of simplicity in treatment, we confine our attention here to the predominant part of it. <sup>2</sup> xii. 267-70.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ānandaśāstra*'s gloss on Śaṅkara's com. on iii. 25 and v. 3.

striving which may, at any moment, be felt in such activity is rather an index that the goal has not been reached. To reach it which, according to all Indian thinkers, is a state characterised by peace of spirit, 'a repose that ever is the same', this need for effort must wholly disappear. Hence it is not enough for attaining the ideal to dismiss self-interest; the notion of agency also must be given up. In other words, the agent should transcend the sense of duty itself by rising above himself completely. As the *Mahābhārata* puts it, we should first forswear all selfishness, and then 'forswear that by which we do so'.<sup>1</sup> The thought here is that unselfishness which is conscious of itself is not the perfect form of it. We have a sample of such a totally impersonal attitude, though but a transient one, in art experience, where the object is contemplated, neither as related to oneself nor as related to others, but solely for its own sake.<sup>2</sup> It is only when we succeed in liberating us from ourselves in this sense that we might

'Love all loveliness, nor yearn  
With tyrannous longings; undisturbed might live  
Greeting the summer's and the spring's return,  
Nor wailing that their joy is fugitive'.

But here the question may be asked whether such transcendence is at all possible in the case of moral activity, whatever be the truth as regards aesthetic experience. The answer is that it is quite possible as seen, for example, in a mother devoting herself to the care of her child. In bestowing that care, she acts as she ought to; but yet it is not a mere sense of duty that actuates her, as it may be in the case of a nurse. Her response is on a higher plane where the sense of duty merges in love, and she grows completely un-selfconscious in attending to the needs of the child. This is what is meant by the saying that love is stronger than duty. The same purpose is present in both the mother and the nurse, viz., the welfare of the child; but, in the case of the mother, the service gains a new significance as

<sup>1</sup> *Tyaja dharmam adharmaṁ ca ubhe satyāṁte tyaja |*

*Ubhe satyāṁte tyaktvā yena tyajasi tat tyaja || (Śānti-parva.)*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Sambandha-viśeṣa-svīkāra-parihāra-niyamānadhyaṁsāyāt sādharāṇyena pratītiḥ: Kāvya-prakāśa*, iv. 27-8.

the spontaneous expression of a unique attitude towards the object of devotion. The attainment of a similar level of action, in respect not of this person or that but of all, represents the Indian ideal of life. The agent passes in it from a state of striving morality to that of spontaneous service where he acts as he does, because he cannot but do so. The activity then becomes the natural manifestation of an inner attitude of soul, and is consequently characterised not by constraint or strife but by supreme joy which is the sign of liberation from it. The merely outward life, the common conventional morality which may not always point to a corresponding inner urge, altogether disappears. That marks the culmination of the discipline, and he, who has reached it, is no longer an aspirant (*sādhaka*) but is a perfected saint (*siddha*). Some of the best portions of the *Gītā* are taken up with a description of this super-individual or universal life.<sup>1</sup>

If such be the final ideal, then there is a wide gulf separating it from the discipline of the first stage; and further training becomes necessary to transform the moral activity of that stage into spontaneous and selfless service. It may seem, from the example given above of a mother's care for her child, that love will suffice for such transformation; but it cannot. It may suffice in her case, because the service is quite restricted in its scope. Her solicitude for the welfare of her child does not necessarily imply equal solicitude on her part for the children of others. But the service, which the complete achievement of the goal of life signifies, cannot be thus restricted. It can know of neither exclusions nor preferences. This service also undoubtedly involves love; and an old Sanskrit verse describes the attitude of a person, who has reached the goal, as that of a parent to whom the whole world is like his own household.<sup>2</sup> But it is a love which is mediated by comprehensive knowledge. To know all, it may be said, is to love all; or, to use the words of the poet, 'Utter knowledge is but utter love'. If one form of love is notoriously blind, all forms of it operate more or less instinctively and not with complete understanding. The

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., ii. 55 ff; xiv. 22 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ayam nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām |*  
*Udāra-caritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam ||*

only key to such understanding is philosophy. That is, the gulf between common morality and the ideal, referred to above, can be bridged only by philosophic knowledge; and for the acquisition of such knowledge, a further course of discipline, which is predominantly intellectual, becomes necessary.

Here we see the relation of philosophic theory to the ideal of practical life. It serves to consummate the aim which is involved in the moral life.<sup>1</sup> For this purpose of consummating the ideal any one of the doctrines, which commends unselfish service, will suffice, provided it embodies, at the same time, a self-consistent view of the universe. Further, since we are now occupied with the ideal of life realisable here, under empirical conditions and not elsewhere, it will suffice to take into consideration the teaching of the systems chiefly in so far as it concerns the place of the individual in the universe as a whole and to his relation to other living beings. This does not mean that the other parts of the doctrines are unnecessary or useless, but only that divergences there, however important they may be for those who are concerned with the exclusive validity of particular doctrines, do not matter for our present purpose. There are, we know, such differences as, for instance, in regard to the ultimate nature of the self; but for us they only mean that the doctrines assign different metaphysical reasons to show the need for renunciation and service, which all of them alike admit as essential to the ideal. But whichever be the doctrine chosen, it is absolutely necessary that its teaching should, as a whole, be properly assimilated, if it is to have effective influence on everyday conduct. It is not enough to think and know; one must also feel and experience. That is, the knowledge conveyed by the teaching should be transformed into an immediate conviction, if it is to issue in unbidden action, like a mother's love. In her case also, there is a similar realisation. It is only such a living awareness, and not a merely conceptual knowledge of reality that can inspire love which will transmute conduct. But it is necessary to remember that the two types of love are quite different. The one, viz., instinctive love is really a form of attachment (*mamatā*) as shown by the exclusions it implies, whereas the other signifies, as we know, complete detachment

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Sarvaṁ karmākhilam Pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate* || Gītā, iv. 33.

and therefore equal love for all. The latter resembles what theistic creeds like Christianity term 'divine love'; but even from that, it differs in some vital points. To mention only one of them: we are there in the realm of faith and not, as here, of knowledge or insight into the ultimate nature of the universe. It is this insight or abiding enlightenment that forms the third and last feature of the common Indian ideal of life to which I desire to draw attention now.

When the ethical training of the first stage comes to be aided by such enlightenment, renunciation, instead of being merely an aim externally regulating conduct, becomes the natural expression of an inner conviction; and, in like manner, service, instead of being a means to an end, becomes the necessary consequence of that conviction.<sup>1</sup> Or, to state the same otherwise, the constraint of obligation is replaced by the spontaneity of love. Owing to this total metamorphosis, moral action passes into a higher form. To a person that has reached this stage, the duties of his station, as such, to whose importance in the earlier stage of the discipline I drew attention, lose their special significance; and he reacts to presented situations without relating them, as before, to himself. It is this transcending of all subjective or personal valuation which is the significance of the Upanishadic saying that a knower is not troubled by thoughts like 'Have I not done the right?' or 'Have I done the wrong?'<sup>2</sup> It means that he rises above the moods of self-approbation and self-condemnation. Consequently, though still an actor on the stage of the world like others, his point of view becomes that of an impartial spectator.<sup>3</sup> He will necessarily continue to work and help others, but the service which he renders will extend to all without any distinction whatsoever. Thanks to his enlightenment and the new perspective he has thereby gained, it will also be the best of its kind. That is, whatever particular form it may take—whether it be directed to soothing others' sorrow or furthering others' joy—it will not aim merely at their material well-being but will also tend towards their spiritual uplift. And by these efforts to raise others to a higher plane

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Sarvatraiva hi adhyātma-śāstre kṛtārthalakṣaṇāni yāni tānyeva sādhanāni upadīṣyante*—Śaṅkara on Gītā, ii, 54.

<sup>2</sup> See *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, ii, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Sāṅkhya-kārikā*, st. 65.

of life, he becomes their true benefactor. Even more important than this direct good will be the influence which he silently exerts on them by his life led in entire consonance with the ideal. This is the *Gītā* conception of *loka-saṁgraha*: 'What the best men do, that becomes the standard for the rest.'<sup>1</sup> It is this ideal which is the culmination of the twofold training, moral and intellectual, that the Indian doctrines hold before us as *jīvanmukti*. Even those who do not formally accept this type of release and maintain that the ideal can be attained only hereafter agree that this feature of enlightened and self-forgetting service characterises the final state attainable in the present life.

Many a sage whose memory is preserved in Indian tradition, we learn, led a life of such disinterested and loving service. Of the instances that spring at once to mind, we may mention Vālmiki whose great epic of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been the source of inspiration to successive generations of men and women. When Sītā, the queen of Rāma, was all too cruelly banished, he proved a ready refuge to her. He brought up her twin sons, restored them to Rāma and, realising how pure she was, he vindicated her against the infamy that had so unjustly been cast upon her. His sympathies, indeed, extended beyond human kind to all sentient beings; and, as recorded in the epic itself, it was his pity at the sight of a bird killed by a heartless fowler, when it was disporting itself, that was the occasion for the birth of India's classical poesy. This ideal of practical life, we also come across every now and then in the works of great Indian poets. Kālidāsa, in more than one place, expresses his conception of the supreme God in terms of it—as ever intent on the welfare of his creatures but with never a thought of himself.<sup>2</sup> Some of the best characters again which the poet has created, are meant to illustrate this ideal of what may be described as morality touched with vision. Kaṇva, for example, whose serene and benignant influence is felt throughout the play of *Sākuntalam* is a selfless sage who watches over the welfare of all about him and is, in particular, the help of the helpless, as shown by the belief prevalent in the whole hermitage that he looks upon the heroine, who is an orphan thrown on his compassion, as his

<sup>1</sup> iii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g., *Mālavikāgni-mitra*, i. i; *Kumārasaṁbhava*, vi. 26.

life's all (*jīvita-sarvasva*). In the *Nāgānanda* of another poet, while the ascetic life is admired on account of its freedom, purity and simplicity, the negative form of it is condemned on the score that it shuts out opportunities for doing good to others.<sup>1</sup> In our own time, Tagore has immortalised the same ideal of disinterested care for the good of others in various poems. It will suffice to refer to one where a young ascetic, Upagupta is portrayed as rushing to the aid of a castaway woman, whose enticing invitation he had once declined, saying that he would come when the time was ripe. One day thereafter, finding her lying in the shadow of the city wall 'struck with the black pestilence, her body spotted with sores', he was moved by love and 'taking her head on his knees, he moistened her lips with water and smeared her body with balm'. 'Who are you, merciful one?' asked the woman. 'The time, at last, has come to visit you, and I am here' replied the ascetic.

The message of Indian philosophy is that man should seek for the fulfilment of his highest being in such service. The distinctive features of this service, as I have tried to point out, are that it should be rendered in a spirit of absolute disinterestedness and that it should be rooted in an all-comprehensive love which is the outcome of complete enlightenment. Circumstances have in recent times tended to weaken the emphasis once laid on these features; and the consequence has been the subordination, on the whole, of spiritual to worldly ends in the pursuits of life. The idea of altruistic service is, indeed, there; but its scope has been narrowed in various soul-cramping ways. Its quality also has deteriorated, particularly on account of attempts made to reconcile service to others with what is called 'reasonable self-love'. But though, by reason of these radical modifications, the old ideal has been much obscured, it has not fortunately died out, for our own generation furnishes an outstanding example of it in one whose unselfish labours in the case of not merely his countrymen but of all humanity is shedding fresh light upon our land. The great need of the hour is to revivify our faith in this ideal. Though it is a characteristic feature of the Indian teaching, there is nothing racial or credal in this ideal to restrict its applicability to India. It seems, on the other



hand, to possess a permanent value for all. When we remember that the teaching starts with the watchword, 'Prefer not yourself to others,' we see that its value should be particularly great in guiding the present-day world, and saving it from the heart-breaking experiences like those through which it is now passing.

# THE QUEST AFTER PERFECTION \*

## LECTURE I

According to the terms of the endowment, these Lectures should deal with 'the inner meaning of human history'. This description of their subject-matter implies that there is some ultimate purpose which man as such continually pursues, but that he does so unknowingly or, at all events, without a complete consciousness of it. If it is such a distinctive feature of man to pursue this purpose, we shall be able to determine it, at least in a general way, by inquiring wherein he most differs from the rest of sentient creation. The difference lies, as is commonly recognised, in the fact that he can become self-conscious or explicitly aware of his own identity. While other animals also lead a conscious life, they never know that they do so. In the words of one of our scriptures,<sup>1</sup> they live only from moment to moment, whereas man is aware of the past as well as the future. It is a great gift, because it enables him to review his thoughts, feelings, and actions as if they were apart from himself and pass judgment upon them. This capacity for self-criticism necessarily points to an awareness of a standard by which he judges; and the standard can be nothing short of absolute perfection, for the simple reason that the need for criticism will continue to be felt until an ideal, which is free from all imperfections and is therefore completely satisfying, is reached. In fact, man would not feel that he was imperfect if he had not within him such an ideal, latent though it may be. Whether he will ever attain it or whether, in thinking he will, he is only chasing a will-o'-the-wisp is a question to which I shall advert later. For the present it will suffice to note the existence in his mind of this ideal, urging him to strive for reaching a state in which he may rest with a feeling of contentment.

It is the presence within him of this ideal of perfection that makes man a spiritual being. Though all people are alike prompted by it, a loyal response to its promptings is by no

\* The Principal Miller Lectures delivered on 17 and 18 December 1940, under the auspices of the University of Madras.

<sup>1</sup> *Aitareya Aranyaka*, II. iii. 2.

means easy, for man is also a natural being. That is, he is not only inspired by a consciousness of what he *ought to be*; he is also what he *is*, which tends to keep him bound to the pursuit of lower ends. This double nature results in an internal conflict between the flesh and the spirit or, as they are otherwise termed, the lower and the higher selves; and only some can, by overcoming it, respond whole-heartedly to the bidding of the higher self. It is to their thought and labour that human progress is entirely due. Since, however, the ideal is not explicitly known, even they can aim at it only tentatively; and the ends, which they actually pursue, may fall far short of it. My object in to-day's lecture is to find out whether we can define the ideal better, by considering the scope and nature of these tentative ends. I shall select for consideration what are called the eternal values, viz., Goodness, Beauty and Truth which are typical of such ends. They are now often regarded as standing for the ultimate ideal itself; but, I hope, it will become clear as I proceed that it is not correct to do so and that in pursuing them, however praiseworthy the pursuit in itself may be, man is still groping about for his final goal.

### I. BEAUTY

To begin with the second of these three values, viz., beauty, and consider it in relation to art first. It is well known that the contemplation of a work of art leads to an attitude of mind which is quite impersonal. Man not only grows unselfish here, but also forgets himself completely; and in the supreme aesthetic moment, he is conscious of nothing but the object or the situation portrayed in the work of art in question. His attitude then resembles what the *yogins* term *savikalpaka-samādhi*, in which one loses oneself, as it were, in contemplative union with the object. As a consequence of this self-forgetfulness, man rises above all the cares and anxieties of everyday life and experiences a rare kind of satisfaction, such as characterises, according to what I have stated, the realisation of the ultimate ideal. Further, this satisfaction, as commonly construed, is, like the final ideal, sought for its own sake and not as a means to anything else. All this is true; yet art experience cannot serve as that ideal, for it has, at least, one great deficiency which renders it unfit to do so. The contemplative satisfaction which it signifies is

transient, because it lasts only as long as the art stimulus lasts; and the stimulus is bound to end, sooner or later, since it arises from an external and fictitious situation created by the artist. It is not suggested by this, that art experience will not leave its wholesome influence behind. All that is meant is that, whatever may be the nature and extent of that influence, the experience itself, with its distinctive features, disappears after a time. And no state that is transitory can obviously be regarded as the final goal of life, whatever its other excellences may be.

To turn now from art to nature: There is a view, put forward by some, that beauty has no meaning when applied to physical objects. What they mean by it is that whether a natural object is beautiful or not does not depend upon itself, but upon what *we* can make it mean. 'Nature is mute' says Croce, 'if man does not make her speak'. But we may, perhaps, dismiss that view for this reason among others, viz., that while, according to it, all external objects must stand on the same footing, some actually appear to us as more attractive and arresting than others. Assuming then that there is no absurdity in speaking of beauty in nature, I may point out that that beauty in its entirety—immanent, as the poets say, in everything 'from the creeping plant to sovereign man'—is beyond common human experience. Such of it as ordinarily comes into view may be the beauty of single objects like a smiling flower or of a natural scene like a landscape radiant in the morning sun. In either case, it is but a fragment of nature that is presented; and we cannot lose sight of its boundaries at the time of appreciating it, as it necessarily appears in its cosmical context. It thus differs from a work of art which is a world by itself, and is so self-complete that it has been compared by some to a monad. In this respect, the beauty of nature, as it ordinarily reveals itself to us, hardly reaches the level of beauty in art which absorbs our entire attention. And so long as the appreciation of nature is piecemeal, the deficiency of transience pointed out above in the case of art experience is also here, because the fragmentary spectacle cannot be held before the mind for very long. Sooner or later it is succeeded by another, and the experience to which it gives rise may be altogether unaesthetic. There is also the possibility here of a beautiful spectacle in nature, because of its reality, changing its appeal from the aesthetic to the practical, even within the

time it is kept in sight. A person admiring the scenic beauty of a mountain may conceivably be diverted from it at any moment by the thought of some practical purpose, say, of making the place fit for a health or holiday resort. It may thus become the focus of a different kind of interest; but no such diversion of interest is conceivable in the case of art, because its object is unreal. To a person contemplating the same mountain depicted in a picture, the idea of making it subserve a practical end does not occur at all. Thus the realisation of beauty in nature can no more be the final ideal than the realisation of beauty in art can.

That an exclusive devotion to the pursuit of beauty, whether in art or in nature, does not satisfy all the needs and aspirations of the human heart is, indeed, a theme which is familiar to readers of poetry. Tennyson's *Palace of Art*, for instance, is based upon it. In that poem, as is well known, the poet describes a gifted soul as building for itself a fine and spacious mansion amidst magnificent surroundings, but on the summit of a hill far away from the common people. After ornamenting it with artistic works of great beauty and splendour, it enters the happy abode saying to itself, 'All these are mine; and let the world have peace or wars, it is one to me.' This self-complacent attitude, no doubt, does not continue very long, because the soul, which has thus isolated itself from others, grows penitent of its pride and unsocial behaviour and, at last, steps down from its lofty mansion to join the common life and share its sorrows and its joys. But the poem makes it clear that there is nothing in aesthetic experience itself to guarantee against a life of self-centred satisfaction. The ideal of perfection, if it should answer to that description at all, cannot allow any side of human nature to be starved; and it will not therefore be ever divorced from sympathy for fellow beings.

I have dwelt at some length on the inadequacy of the value of beauty to serve as the final ideal. Similar defects characterise the other two values also; but it will suffice to refer to them only briefly now, as I shall deal with them again later in this lecture.

## 2. GOODNESS

This term, as is well known, is extremely ambiguous. But it is enough for our immediate purpose to take it in its most

usual sense of the moral good and understand by it, in particular, what is signified by the golden rule, viz., that we should do to others, as we would desire them to do to us.<sup>1</sup> Man's belief in the need for such altruistic activity arises directly from his self-conscious nature, for he thereby becomes aware not only of his own self but also of others as having selves like his own and as subject to the same feelings of pain and pleasure as he is. That is to say, man realises through it that he is a social being, with obligations to discharge towards others amidst whom he lives. But when we remember that he, as a natural being, has also lower motives to contend with, we see that the pursuit of the good requires strenuous and continued effort; and so long as there is need for conscious effort, it is clear that the ideal is not reached. The moral good cannot therefore represent the final goal of life, until self-love is wholly overcome and altruistic service becomes the effortless expression of a permanent attitude of mind. Long training in social morality may establish in us habits of right conduct, and moral activity may thereby become a second nature with us. But such training, by its very nature, is adjusted to a general standard; and, while it may ordinarily be adequate to guide us aright in situations that more or less conform to that standard, it cannot be trusted to do so always. For there are sure to arise new situations in life, or there may suddenly present itself a conflict of duties, when it may fail us. Such situations will give rise to a tension of mind which cannot, unless moral success is a matter of pure chance, be got over till we are able to perceive *for ourselves* the kind of action which they demand of us. This perception presupposes common social morality, as its indispensable basis; but it also needs, over and above it, as I shall try to point out, a knowledge, or more strictly an intuitive understanding, of the ultimate truth about reality. In other words, goodness as a value depends for its complete realisation on another member of the trinity, viz., truth, and cannot therefore by itself stand for the highest ideal.

### 3. TRUTH

The deficiency of art experience, viz., that it is transient, because of its dependence upon a situation created by the artist,

<sup>1</sup> *Ātmanah pratikūlah yat parasya na tadācaret.*

is not found in the case of philosophic truth, for it has direct reference to reality. Nor does it suffer from the other drawback of fragmentariness characterising our sense of beauty in nature, for such truth is all-comprehensive, its object being the whole of existence. Any satisfaction, which its discovery may have for man, should therefore be quite stable. Further, the pursuit, as in the case of art and morality, is also marked by unselfishness, for truth, in its pure and undefiled form, is not likely to be attained if it is not sought for its own sake. Its purpose is to satisfy disinterested curiosity, and the intrusion of any personal interest like gain or glory is sure to vitiate the result that may be reached.

But, all the same, this value also has its limitation for, as now commonly conceived, it is speculative and signifies a purely theoretical understanding of reality. Such a conception fails to take account of the bearing which philosophy, unless we exclude from it the consideration of the nature of man and his place in the universe, has on his life. Bradley, for instance, states that philosophy 'seeks to gain possession of Reality but only in an ideal form'.<sup>1</sup> Another modern thinker writes that 'its mission terminates in the quest rather than any actions that may follow it'.<sup>2</sup> This bearing upon life, as implied in the latter quotation, is not, indeed, denied now; but, as being of a practical character, it is generally regarded as the concern of religion and not of philosophy. Here, it seems, we have an unwarranted extension to philosophy of a feature found in the pure, as distinguished from the applied, sciences. What I want to point out is that, unlike the truths of the pure sciences, those of philosophy and kindred subjects of study *necessarily* influence life. Indeed, they cannot be prevented from doing so, when once they have satisfied our reason and won our acceptance. A person may learn that the planet Saturn has a certain number of rings encircling it. That is knowing a scientific fact, and the knowledge may have no direct relation to his everyday mode of living. But the same cannot be said, for example, of the truth about the survival of the self. It is sure to influence life—in one way if a person believes in it, and in quite a different way if he does not. The study of formal logic again, to take another instance, with its

<sup>1</sup> Bradley: *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> J. S. Mackenzie: *Ultimate Values*, p. 26.

exposition of the nature and sources of fallacious reasoning cannot be without its effect on the thinking of those that devote themselves to it. The ultimate truth of philosophy is of this kind; and, if what I have said about its significance for man is correct, it must contain a reference, latent or explicit, to the final ideal of life which, as an ideal, implies that he ought to aim at realising it in fact. To separate the theory of truth from its practical implication<sup>1</sup> is to make philosophy a mere game of speculation; and to rest in it is not to realise truth, but rather to leave off its pursuit in the middle.

To summarise what has been stated so far: A common feature of the pursuit of these values is its disinterestedness. Any admixture of selfish aim contaminates, and at once brings them down from the high place they occupy in the scale of values. If, for instance, a person tries to do good to others in order that they may do good to him in return, or even that he may thereby enjoy the consciousness of his own goodness, he is not really acting morally. In the words of the *Gītā* a moral action, truly so described, signifies that it has been prompted by *sattva*, and not by either *rajas* or *tamas*. A person may repay a debt willingly or unwillingly; and the act may outwardly appear to be the same. Really, however, it is very different, for it is not the act alone that counts but also the spirit or manner in which it is done. 'God cares a great deal more,' some one has stated, 'for adverbs than he does for verbs'. It is chiefly because of this feature of disinterestedness that these values are termed 'higher', to contrast them with others like wealth or valour which are generally tainted by selfishness and are therefore lower or impure. Apart from this common feature, which is negative, each value has its own positive excellence. The pursuit of the good signifies altruistic service; that of the beautiful results in relief from the perpetual tension of life as it is commonly led; and that of the true yields comprehensive knowledge which, by removing all doubt and uncertainty, produces a stable conviction. But each has also its peculiar limitation. The first is necessarily characterised by strife, and can never be fully achieved in and by itself;

<sup>1</sup> As thus philosophic truth is not utilised for achieving an end *external* to it, there is no contradiction here of what was stated earlier, viz., that it should be sought for its own sake.



the second may, no doubt, be realised but only for a limited time; and the third, as commonly understood now, being purely speculative, may prove utterly barren of result so far as practical life is concerned. Thus, though the realisation of these values means the overcoming of certain prominent deficiencies of common life to a greater or less extent, they have defects which render them, on the whole, unfitted to serve as man's final ideal, the attainment of which alone can completely satisfy his spiritual nature.

But it is necessary to guard against a possible misapprehension here. In criticising thus the triad of values, I only mean that none of them is ultimate in the sense of an all-sufficing or absolute value which leaves nothing further to be desired. That is, indeed, clear from the fact that they are reckoned as *three*. But all of them are ultimate in the other sense of being fundamental. Each has its own characteristic feature; and each appeals to a distinctive side of man's spiritual nature. That is, though none of them by itself suffices to be the final human goal, each stands for some necessary aspect of it. No final ideal can exclude altruistic service or restful peace or a comprehensive knowledge of reality.

All the three values are thus included in the ideal. A far more important point about them for us now is that, as shown by their description above, they supplement one another, and are sufficient, when taken together, to yield us all its essential characteristics. What then is the nature of the final ideal? To begin with, disinterestedness should be a constant and outstanding feature of it. Further features of it are given by the excellences of the three values, but freed from their respective shortcomings. That is to say, conscious effort must disappear in the case of goodness, and moral action must become spontaneous and joyful. The restful peace and relief from the tension of life, resulting from the appreciation of beauty, must be not provisional but constant; and this necessarily implies that it should be derived from the contemplation of the whole of reality, and not merely of a portion of it, or an imaginative situation created by the artist. The complete knowledge of reality again, for which philosophic truth stands, must not remain a mere ornament of the mind but should become the inspiration of daily life. To set free these values from their respective deficiencies will be to

metamorphose them totally.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the ideal is not a mere combination of the three values but represents a creative synthesis of them, by which they are fused and welded into a new unity. It may consequently be said not only to include, but also to transcend them. This new ideal is, to characterise it in brief, a state of absolute unselfishness and of spontaneous joy that manifests itself always—whether one is engaged in outward action or is absorbed in inward contemplation. The testimony of Shakespeare in any matter is of great value, especially when it is found in his *Sonnets*, where he is commonly taken to have unlocked his heart. In consonance with his theme there, the poet generally refers only to the beauty of his friend and to truth by which he means the friend's constancy; but in one sonnet,<sup>2</sup> he mentions the good also, and there he indicates the supreme value of the result of unifying them by speaking of it as quite a rarity:

'Fair, kind and true often lived alone,  
Which three till now never kept seat in one'.<sup>3</sup>

Here naturally the question will arise whether such an ideal is at all feasible. How can man, it may be asked, who is finite and fallible, ever become perfect? There is a view held by some thinkers both in the East and in the West, according to which, strife, sorrow and insecurity are necessary features of human life and the only escape from them for man is in betaking himself to a realm which his own mind has fashioned, such for instance as imaginative art. In the actual world, he is entirely at the mercy of blind forces which are sure to frustrate his efforts to attain the ideal. This view assumes that the real neither is nor ever can become perfect, and that the ideal is always

<sup>1</sup> It is in this sense that the final ideal is a synthesis of the three values. Each of the last stands for a partial realisation of the ideal and so is ultimately a failure. As at least, partial, they are sought by man commonly.

<sup>2</sup> No. CV.

<sup>3</sup> Compare also Tennyson's lines prefixed to his *Palace of Art*, already referred to, where he speaks of these values as

'three sisters

That doat upon each other, friends to man,  
Living together under the same roof,  
And never can be sundered without tears.'

bound to remain unreal. It thus postulates a complete lack of harmony between the world of facts and the world of ideals. That is pessimism, pure and simple. It looks upon life as 'a vale of tears' and regards art, to confine our attention only to it, as nothing more than a hobby or pastime to which man may turn for relief from the worries and vexations of routine life. The practical outcome of this view is, as indeed is admitted, the passive virtue of resignation. A person resorting to it, though resigning himself to whatever may happen, may not be insensitive to the troubles of others. But the help which he can render them will be such as depresses him that gives and him that takes, because it has its source, not in love with its creative insight, but in pity for them as fellow sufferers in the same tragedy of life. It may be that this doctrine of despair cannot be logically refuted; yet the best thought all over the world is different; and, in India in particular, the majority of thinkers have all along believed not only in the superiority of the ideal of perfection but also in the possibility of realising it.

We may refer, in support of their belief, to the fact that man is not an alien in the universe but a part of it; and there is consequently no reason why it should prove hostile to him in his efforts to maintain an ideal which, be it remembered, is not the fabrication of a few minds but is implicit in his very nature. The attempt to accomplish it, no doubt, involves an internal struggle, especially in its initial stages owing to the double nature of man already mentioned; but it is his duty, as a self-conscious being, to overcome it. We may even go further and say that he not only ought to overcome it but *must* do so, for the nature of the higher self is such that it will not allow itself to be suppressed or to be subordinated to the lower, unless man has once for all sunk back into the life of the mere animal. Here is the necessity which impels him onwards; and he cannot rest until the opposition between them is resolved, and the lower self has been turned into a willing and ardent ministrant to the purposes of the higher. One may find a brief spell of peace by turning to works of art or other similar means of escape; but that is only to evade the chief problem of life and not to solve it. What is a fact, however, is that the advance towards the ideal is very much chequered and discouragingly slow; but slow or uncertain progress need not necessarily mean that the pursuit

will end in failure. Even if we grant that perfection can never be finally attained, that man's reach will always exceed his grasp, it would be necessary to recognise it as a regulative ideal, in order to determine the *direction* in which man should advance, for no continuous progress is conceivable without reference to a single definite goal.<sup>1</sup> The adoption of perfection as the one ideal will help him to be ever progressing towards that which he instinctively feels to be his ultimate aim in life. By the term 'ideal' here is accordingly to be understood not a mere glorified idea for, though not finally achievable, there is no degree of approximation to it beyond which one may not aspire. To say that the ideal cannot be actualised is not consequently the same as summarily discarding it as false and futile.

And now as regards art: So far from being a mere sanctuary of escape from the troubles of life, it is an 'intimation' to man of the possibility of realising the ideal. In fact, according to Indian thinkers,<sup>2</sup> the goal of perfection, in its essence, is already within the experience of all that are familiar with art. Like it, art experience also, as shown by the description of it given above, is altogether impersonal and is marked by pure and spontaneous delight. It gives us a foretaste of the ideal state, and may thereby serve as a more powerful incentive to its pursuit than anything else. By provisionally fulfilling the need felt by man for restful joy, it may induce him to do his utmost to secure it finally. It may have its limitations, such as lack of stability; but they only show that art experience is not the ideal itself, but is merely its analogue. They do not disprove that both experiences are of the same order; and we may well conclude from the fact of the one to the feasibility of the other.<sup>3</sup>

But how is this state to be attained? Just as its idea is derived by a synthesis of the three values, it is achieved by a combined pursuit of them all. In other words, they are not only a help in formulating the ideal; they also serve, when pursued together, as the means to reach it. But there is an important difference in the way in which they do so. I have just pointed out the unique manner in which the pursuit of the

<sup>1</sup> The alternative of a plurality of goals, like the triad of values, may prove distracting or lead to indulgence in caprice.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Brahmāvādamīmāṃsā anubhāvayanī Kāvya-prakāśa*, iv. 26-8.

<sup>3</sup> The same remark applies to the beautiful in nature also.

beautiful may help the attainment of the ideal. Being only analogous to it, the help it renders is indirect. By carrying us to the threshold, as it were, of the ideal and giving us a glimpse of it, art but inspires us with a desire for realising it. Unlike it, the other two values of goodness and truth, have a direct role to play; and they actually lead us to it, if pursued in intimate relation with each other. I shall now briefly point out how their correlated pursuit transforms both of them, and results in the ideal which is higher than either.

(1) The defect of a purely speculative knowledge of truth, as stated above, is that the seeker of it may feel satisfied with the intellectual conviction which it brings, and that it may therefore remain all unrelated to life. Instances are not wanting to show that strong theoretical convictions may coexist with defective conduct. But it may be asked how such dissonance between philosophic belief and practical life is possible, if, as I have said, there is a necessary connection between them. The answer is that the belief *does* tend to influence life but that there are undisciplined impulses in man which, without his knowing, assert themselves and prevent it from doing so. It is on account of such unconscious assertion of them that we, in actual living, lose sight of the truth, although we may have given our intellectual assent to it. Here we see the need for connecting the pursuit of truth with that of goodness. If these impulses are brought well under control by means of systematic moral training, philosophic truth comes, of itself, to influence life; and the process of its embodiment in practice deepens and intensifies our understanding of it, as mere arguments never can. The reason for this is the constant dwelling upon the truth necessitated by its application to everyday conduct. It removes gradually from our mind all beliefs which are incompatible with the philosophic truth we have learnt; and, as the pressure of these false beliefs grows less and less, we become more and more intimate with the truth and assimilate it better and better. When this process of inward assimilation advances sufficiently, the knowledge of ultimate reality, instead of remaining a mere intellectual conviction, becomes suddenly kindled into an intuition of it. We then see the truth *for ourselves*, and may be said to have made it our own.

The term 'intuition' however, as ordinarily used, is notoriously

ambiguous; and it is therefore necessary to add a few words as to what I mean by it. Broadly speaking, there seem to be two senses which the word bears: it signifies either a means to the discovery of new facts, or only a change in the mode of viewing what is already known. The ambiguity attaching to the term appears to be largely traceable to a confusion between these two uses. I am using it here in the latter sense, as equivalent to merely an altered way of knowing a thing already known which, in the present case, is the truth about reality as a whole. This truth, whether it is learnt from others or reached through reason, is comprehended by us only mediately or from without; but, when intuited, it becomes realised from within. Or, to state the same in other words, thought becomes thereby transformed into experience. The Sanskrit word *jñāna*, we may note by the way, is used indifferently in these two senses, and may mean either mediate knowledge or direct experience. But sometimes it is distinguished from *viññāna*, which corresponds exactly to 'intuition' as used above. Śaṅkara, in his commentary on the *Gītā* where this distinction is made, says that *jñāna* is mediate knowledge of truth, and that *viññāna* means the same but 'as brought within or transmuted into one's own experience'.<sup>1</sup> It is this feature of immediacy that is common to both kinds of intuition. There is nothing mysterious or occult about intuition in this use of the word, as there may be in the other. It also claims, no doubt, to be true like the other; but that is because it depends upon what has already satisfied our intellect and won our acceptance, and not independently as in the other case. It would, perhaps, be better to describe it as immediate experience or insight than as intuition. As an example of such immediate experience, we may give a man's awareness of his own pain or pleasure or any other aspect of his inner life, as distinguished from his knowledge of the corresponding states affecting others. A doctor understands the ailment of his patient through its

<sup>1</sup> *Jñātānām tathāiva 'svāmūhava-karaṇam* (vi. 8). Cf. iii. 41., ix. 1., and xviii. 42. We may substitute for this all mediate knowledge, whether it is derived through others' teaching, inference or logical construction. It may even be due to another's intuition in the first sense, if such be admitted. In all these cases, there may be need for changing it into immediate experience. It is only when the original knowledge is *one's own* intuition, in the sense of discovery, that there is not this need.

symptoms or from the outside, while the patient himself experiences it from the inside.

(2) This is how knowledge of truth is transformed when its pursuit is combined with that of goodness. The reverse also takes place since what we believe, as already observed, cannot but influence what we do. When the living of the good life comes to be illumined by the knowledge of ultimate truth, it will be characterised by a new spirit of confidence. The reason why such confidence is lacking in the pursuit of the good by itself is that moral action, signifying as it does a reaction to objective situations that demand some change, presupposes a proper, though only an implicit, appraisal of them. But every such situation is necessarily relative and fragmentary; and, if it is true that nothing can be fully known except when it is viewed in the perspective of the whole of reality, a proper reaction to it requires complete knowledge. But, ordinarily speaking, man cannot help regarding each situation, more or less, by itself. To set about changing it without a full and clear understanding of it, can only result in activity which is faltering and uncertain; and it may or may not be adequate to meet the requirements of the given situation. An element of contingency thus enters into all moral action. This difficulty in determining what course is right in pursuing the good explains the importance that has all along been attached in the moral life to adherence to social custom. The *Mahābhārata* says that, as the secret of *dharma* is hidden from man, the only course open to him is to follow the example of the better minds of the community to which he belongs.<sup>1</sup> It also seems to be at the root of the practical maxim 'Do the duty that lies nearest to you.' But with a direct experience of reality, man's reaction to any presented situation becomes quite decisive, because he can perceive at once its connection within it. He will be, to cite an illustration given by Bergson, in the position of a person who is appreciating a series of pictures relating to different phases of a city which he has seen, and not in that of one who is trying to do so without a personal knowledge of it. Morality, even then, continues to be the response of the agent to individual situations; but, owing

<sup>1</sup> *Dharmasya tattvaṃ nihitaṃ guhāyāṃ mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ.* (iii. 314. st. 119).

to the comprehensive vision of reality that is his now, it ceases to represent tentative or *ad hoc* decisions as before, and all his actions will find their explanation in his new orientation towards the world, though in diverse ways.

The same insight into the nature of the whole of reality, by revealing the integrity of one's own self, also puts an end to the inner strife between the higher and the lower selves which, as stated earlier, is a great hindrance to the leading of the good life. It is the operation of lower motives that comes in the way of the higher activity. When a person rises above them, his actions, while they may be different considered in their individual aspect, will all alike point to the same unvarying attitude towards the ideal of goodness. Hence conduct and character cease to be externally related; and the one becomes just the outward manifestation of the other. That is to say, philosophic insight determines a man's line of conduct finally, and all his voluntary actions will therefore constitute a consistent whole.

Thus the knowledge of philosophic truth, when it is changed into an immediate experience, transforms the attitude of the moral agent towards himself as well as towards the situations to which he is to respond. An important consequence of this double transformation is that the strifes and perplexities of ordinary life cease, and the doing of good becomes a matter of spontaneous joy. Man becomes self-forgetful in acting; and, though exercising self-control, he will not be aware of it. Self-consciousness being thus transcended, man's experience in the new state may be described as resembling that of art. In fact, art becomes superfluous to him for he reaches the kind of experience, which it can induce, through all voluntary activity. Even when he is not acting and is contemplative, he attains the same attitude since, thanks to his new vision, he sees beauty in nature always, and sees it not in this or that aspect of it merely but in it as a whole. Nay, his attitude then is higher for, in addition to its being detached and restful as in art experience, it is derived directly from nature; and any value is higher, other things being the same, if it is realised through the true instead of the untrue. I may quote in support of this view the following from the *Principia Ethica*<sup>1</sup> of Prof. Moore: 'We do think that the

<sup>1</sup> P. 195.



emotional contemplation of a natural scene, supposing its qualities equally beautiful, is in some way a better state of things than that of a painted landscape; we think that the world would be improved if we could substitute for the best works of representative art *real* objects equally beautiful.'

When goodness and truth are thus pursued together, they serve as complementary to each other and lead to the same result, as the two eyes in seeing lead to the perception of one form or the two ears in hearing to the perception of one note. Knowledge that does not influence practical conduct is an empty accomplishment; and conduct that is not rooted in complete knowledge is 'only blind striving'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the relation between the two is so intimate that neither can entirely fulfil its true aim without the aid of the other. The identity of the result which they yield, if they are properly pursued, is what Socrates meant when he said 'Virtue is knowledge'. It may seem a paradox to us because we commonly take knowledge to stand for mere intellectual conviction which, as already pointed out, may coexist with defective conduct. But it is used here to mean direct experience, which necessarily expresses itself in virtuous conduct. We sometimes think that we knew an act to be wrong, and yet could not help doing it. As an old Sanskrit saying has it, 'Man knows *dharma*, but he does not practise it, and he knows *adharma* but does not desist from it';<sup>2</sup> and there is also its Biblical counterpart, 'The good that I would, I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do.' The fact is that in such cases we only know by hearsay that the act is wrong. If we knew it for ourselves and it was a self-won conviction, we could never have willed it. That is the meaning of the saying 'No one does wrong wittingly'. Our fault is thus really not so much a weakness of will as a lack of direct knowledge. It is, as a result of this combined pursuit of the good and the true, that man attains the ideal of perfection, which may be described indifferently as joyful and disinterested activity inspired by complete enlightenment, or as complete enlightenment which expresses itself as joyful and disinterested activity.

It is the quest of perfection, in this sense, that is the hidden

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Hataṁ jñānaṁ kriyā-hīnaṁ jñāna-hīnā hatā kriyā.*

<sup>2</sup> *Jānāmi dharmam na ca me pravṛttiḥ, jānāmyadharmaṁ na ca me nivṛttiḥ.*

meaning of all human endeavour. The ideal is exactly the same as what Indian thinkers designate as *mokṣa*, and whose achievement they regard as higher than either *dharma* which may roughly be taken to stand for the moral good, or *jñāna* which is knowledge of philosophic truth. As in the case of the ideal so far considered, it also is reached through the combined pursuit of these two. Since, according to the common view, *mokṣa* is a state to be achieved on a supernatural plane, the above identification may appear strange. But I shall deal with this and connected points about the conception of *mokṣa* in the next lecture.

## LECTURE II

I tried to show in the first lecture that the ultimate purpose which man continually endeavours to attain, though not always with a clear knowledge of it, is self-perfection. I also indicated that this ideal had risen to the level of explicit consciousness in the Indian conception of *mokṣa*. My aim to-day will be to explain this conception. I shall also point out that the ideal for which it stands unfolded itself only gradually and that even now, though all Indian thinkers are agreed regarding its ultimacy, there is disagreement among them about several of its details. So far as the latter aim goes, I shall be concerned with what the terms of the endowment describe as the increasing revelation of man's ultimate purpose in the course of the ages. But it is not necessary to treat these two points separately. I shall begin with the second of them, which relates to the progressive unfolding of the ideal; and I hope that, in dealing with it, the first also viz., the conception of *mokṣa* will become clear.

To judge from the literature that has been preserved, the conception of *mokṣa* is found for the first time in the history of Indian thought in the Upaniṣads; and since they are separated from the earlier portions of the Veda by several centuries, we may conclude that it dawned upon the Indian mind only after a prolonged search. But the stages by which the advance towards it was made cannot now be traced, because the long prevalence of the ideal finally reached has led to their almost complete obliteration. Yet so much is quite clear, viz., that the true and the good were pursued separately as ultimate values before *mokṣa* came to be thought of.

### I. TRUTH

The surviving literature of ancient India may be said to start with the ideal of speculative truth, or truth sought for its own sake. The purpose of several philosophic hymns in the R̥gveda is little more than the satisfaction of theoretic, or what is called contemplative, curiosity. The cosmogonic hymns, in particular, illustrate this point very well; and their mythology may well be described as the nature-philosophy of the age. The poet-philosophers of the day marvel at the vastness and splendour

of the universe, and exhibit a passionate desire to know how it came into being. One of them, for instance, asks of what material it is constituted, 'What was the wood and what the tree from which they fashioned forth the earth and heaven?';<sup>1</sup> and another, casting a speculative glance at the heavens, enquires, 'These stars which are set on high and appear at night, whither do they go in the day-time?'<sup>2</sup>—questions which suggest no motive beyond the mere desire to know. The answers given, as may be expected, are various, being based upon the beliefs prevalent at the time in the religious and other spheres of life. But the Indian came in course of time to conceive a dislike to the pursuit, in such matters, of theoretical knowledge as a final aim, and to feel that it should be sought only if it be useful in the attainment of some practical end. It is quite a commonplace to find it stated in the beginning of serious treatises in Sanskrit that the useless,<sup>3</sup> like the obvious, merits no investigation.

## 2. GOODNESS

The other value of goodness also was once pursued for its own sake; but it is necessary, before considering it, to explain the significance of the word *dharma* which, as I stated yesterday, might be taken as roughly equivalent to it. According to popular usage as well as some systems of thought,<sup>4</sup> *dharma* signifies moral merit, which consists in or results from practising virtues like temperance, charity and compassion, and is therefore the equivalent of goodness. That, however, is not its sole meaning. It is sometimes used to denote ritual or religious duties;<sup>5</sup> and, when so used, it points to activity whose final aim is to secure some personal good to the agent. But even then, the idea of *dharma* necessarily presupposes moral goodness, in its double aspect of devotion to social duties and cultivation of private virtues. There is a simple story narrated in the *Mahābhārata* (xii. 124) to illustrate this point. Once upon a time, it is stated here, Prahlāda,

<sup>1</sup> Rgveda, X. 31. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, I. 24. 10.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., the number of *kāka-danta*. The taste for speculation as such, however, did not entirely disappear. In almost every department of learning, we find discussions whose bearing on practical life is very slight. But this is only the exception that proves the rule.

<sup>4</sup> See *Vātsyāyana* on *Nyāya-sūtra*, I. i. 2.

<sup>5</sup> See *Bhāṣya* on *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra*, I. i. 2.

the king of the demons, defeated Indra in battle and took over from him the whole of the heavenly kingdom. Distressed at this discomfiture, Indra went to his victorious opponent in the guise of a pupil, and served him most dutifully for a long time. Pleased with that service, Prahlāda conferred a boon upon Indra, leaving the choice of it to him. Indra then asked Prahlāda as to how he had come by such a splendid kingdom; and learning that it was the fruit of his goodness he asked for its transfer to himself—a device by which Indra in the act of securing virtue for himself, would deprive his enemy of it. Bound by his promise, Prahlāda agreed. Soon after, he saw something radiant emanating from his frame and passing out. When he questioned what it was, it replied that it was his own virtue moving towards its new abode. But that was not all. Immediately after, he saw another apparition of the same kind; and, on being questioned similarly, it replied that it was *dharma* following virtue unable to bear separation from it. The point thus concretely illustrated in this story, which we have to note, is that the relation between goodness and *dharma* is necessary, so that to speak of a person as devoted to *dharma* is to imply that he is of a virtuous character. With this implication of *dharma* in our mind, we may pass on to consider the place assigned in early Indian thought to the value of goodness.

Passages, commending the pursuit of *dharma* as an end-value, appear on a much larger scale in the Veda than those pointing to truth sought for its own sake. The whole of the Brāhmaṇa literature, which forms the bulk of the Vedas, may be said to be concerned with it. In the language of a somewhat later epoch, it may be described as the *tri-varga* or threefold ideal for, according to it, the only legitimate human values are three, viz., *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, of which the latter two are to subserve the first. This view excludes *mokṣa* from the sphere of the higher values, and therefore also *jñāna*, or knowledge of ultimate reality, which is but a stepping-stone to it in the opinion of all the schools that uphold that ideal. Whatever use was found for knowledge in that view was as subordinate to *dharma*.<sup>1</sup> But, unlike speculative truth, this value continued for long to be

<sup>1</sup> According to the principle enunciated by Jaimini in his Sūtra (I. ii. 7). Cf. Śaṅkara's com. on *Vedānta-sūtra*, I. i. 4.

recognised as ultimate. In many portions of the *Mahābhārata* we find only the *tri-varga* ideal set forth, although the final purport of the epic, in its present form, may be *mokṣa* as expert interpreters point out. Āpastamba again refers to it in his *Dharma-sūtra*;<sup>1</sup> and Jayanta in his *Nyāya-mañjarī* alludes to a school of thought which, in controverting the ideal of *mokṣa*, says 'It is all very well to talk of it as the highest value. But is it feasible at all? Really the values are only three—*dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*; and the so-called fourth value is nothing but a myth. When distress overtakes a man by the death of those near and dear to him, he may talk of *mokṣa*; but when it comes to a question of actually pursuing it, he fails to find any truly practical means to its successful achievement.'<sup>2</sup>

To consider now the ideal of *mokṣa*. As already stated, it is mentioned for the first time in the Upaniṣads; and the fact that they are regarded as the crown of the Vedas points to the belief that it came, in course of time, to be taken as the highest value. But it should not be understood from this that either *dharma* or *jñāna* was excluded, for we come across statements in the Upaniṣads which emphasise the need for both in attaining the ideal of *mokṣa*. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, for example, declares that where *dharma* or ritual is practised, 'there inspiration is born' (ii. 6), and also that 'there is no winning of the goal of life except through knowledge' (iii. 8). While admitting that *jñāna* and *dharma* or *ṛkarma* (to use the term which is commonly substituted for it in this context) are necessary, these early thinkers seem to have discussed for a long time their relation to each other and to the final ideal.<sup>3</sup> The *Īśa Upaniṣad* (st. 9-11), for instance, places equal emphasis on both (*ubhayaṁ saha*); but others, like the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (IV. iv. 22), assign a relatively subordinate position to *ṛkarma*. The same diversity of opinion survives in the later schools of Vedānta, some subordinating *ṛkarma* to *jñāna*, others regarding them as of co-ordinate importance. Without entering into details, we may note that all the schools of Vedānta, while admitting the need for both, refuse to subordinate *jñāna* to *ṛkarma* as the *Mīmāṃsā* does.

<sup>1</sup> II. xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 513-5. This view seems to have been held by the early *Mīmāṃsakas* or, more strictly, the *Yājñīkas*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Vedānta-sūtra*, I. i. iv and III. iv. 1-17.

The new ideal not merely includes the old ones; it also transcends them as shown, for example, by the statement in the *Īśa Upaniṣad* to which I have just referred. According to it, *ḥarṃa* and *jñāna* yield their own distinctive fruits;<sup>1</sup> but the result to which they lead, when pursued together, is higher than either of them. In this process of combined pursuit, the two values are totally transformed; and the transformation is precisely like that which, as pointed out in the previous lecture, the good and the true should undergo, if they are to culminate in the ideal of perfection. In the first place, *jñāna* changes from being mediate knowledge to immediate experience. That, for instance, is the significance of Upanishadic passages which prescribe a course of meditation upon the final truth after it has been learnt.<sup>2</sup> In the second place, *dharma* also undergoes a similar change. Conceived as an ultimate value, it serves, as indicated earlier, a double purpose—securing some personal advantage to the agent, and ministering to the good of others. Of these two, the former or the egoistic aim is here wholly given up, according to the well-known teaching of the *Gītā*;<sup>3</sup> but its altruistic purpose continues as before, so that *dharma* becomes service to others rendered in a spirit of absolute detachment.

A similarly protracted investigation, it may be added, was carried on regarding another point touching the nature of the ideal. The goal of human existence, as first conceived in India, was the attainment of unalloyed and everlasting happiness in a future life by offering sacrifices to the numerous deities believed in at the time, and otherwise propitiating them. Whatever may have been the nature and extent of the self-sacrifice presupposed by a successful achievement of that goal, it cannot be gainsaid that it was finally the seeking of happiness for oneself. This hedonistic aim naturally gave rise to a reaction; and we find springing up various other schools adopting the opposite view and representing the goal as one not of happiness, but only of freedom from pain and suffering. This negative view was advocated, for instance, by the followers of the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and the *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*. There was a reversion from it, afterwards,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Karṃañā pītṛ-lokaḥ*; *vidyayā deva-lokaḥ*. (*Br. Up.* I. v. 16).

<sup>2</sup> E.g., *Vijñāya prajñām kurvita*; (*Br. Up.* IV. iv. 21).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Īśa. Up.* st. 1 and 2.

to the positive ideal of bliss in the Vedānta, which stands for the final verdict of the Indian mind in this, as in so many other, respects. According to all forms of it, the final state of release is characterised not only by the absence of suffering but also by the presence of bliss.<sup>1</sup> The restoration of the earlier aim, it must be added, also meant its sublimation, since the bliss or happiness of *mokṣa* is not conceived as a *new* acquisition by the self but as the regaining of what is intrinsic to it. Further, the notion of the self itself is in one way or another profoundly transformed in all the schools of Vedānta. In the theistic schools, like the Dvaita and the Viśiṣṭādvaita, it is conceived as completely dependent upon God, while according to absolutistic doctrines, like the Advaita, the individual self as such ceases to be, because it merges in the universal self.

The point to be specially noted about this ideal, whether conceived as negative or positive, is that when once it was definitely formulated, it came to be accepted by all the Indian thinkers as the highest of human values. Even the Mīmāṃsakas, the direct successors of the old exponents of *dharma* in the sense of ritual, from whom determined opposition to it might have been expected, acknowledged it; and there is reason to think that the new ideal had been adopted by them by the time of Upavarṣa, who is commonly referred to the early centuries of the Christian era. Thus the conception of *mokṣa* marks a definite advance in the search for the ideal in India; and the step which India took in this is unique in the whole history of human thought. We may have a purely practical ideal or a purely speculative one elsewhere; and we may occasionally find even a welding of the two with a view to reach a higher goal. But the explicit formulation of it, and its acceptance by all thinkers and once for all is peculiar to India alone. It means that there are two aspects of man which need to be taken into consideration in arriving at the true conception of his highest ideal. In the first place, he is ignorant of the ultimate truth; and he is also aware of that ignorance, as shown by his very efforts to philosophise. It is not, however, his only shortcoming. If it were, a knowledge of the ultimate truth would suffice for him to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Tarati lokam ātma-vit*, Ch. Up. VII. i. 3. *Rasaṁ hyevāyām labdhvā ānandī bhavati*, Tai. Up. ii. 7.



attain the goal. But it does not, for every man, according to his past, has more or less of selfish impulses in him; and these need to be brought under proper control, if not altogether eradicated, before he can achieve the ideal. So long as he is subject to their influence, he can neither whole-heartedly pursue the good nor even effectively strive to acquire metaphysical truth—the two necessary requirements for self-perfection. This does not mean that an exclusive attention to either of these aims, viz., goodness and truth, is not of any value. Both, to be sure, leave their elevating influence behind. In the case of moral practice particularly, to quote the words of the *Gītā* (ii. 40), even a slight advance made has a lasting value. What is meant is only that the *complete* development of man's nature rests not on the purification of the impulses alone nor on the removal of ignorance alone, but on both. In fact, as we have already seen, neither can be achieved finally without the help of the other; and the culmination of the one process implies the culmination of the other.<sup>1</sup>

Though agreement has thus been reached in regard to the status as well as the essential nature of the ideal, there are still important points about it which remain undecided. I have already had occasion to allude to one such point, viz., the yet unsettled controversy concerning the precise relation of *karma* and *jñāna* to each other and to the ideal. I shall mention two more; but, in so doing, I shall confine my attention, as I have for the most part done thus far, to the schools of the Vedānta. The other doctrines, including the orthodox *Mīmāṃsā* have for long been superseded completely so that it is not really necessary to refer to them in reckoning up the final conclusions of Indian thought. They mark but stages in the unfolding of the Indian ideal; and their primary interest now, so far at least as our immediate purpose is concerned, is historical.

(1) The first point concerns the question whether or not the ideal can be attained in the present life. Among the Vedāntins, none but Śaṅkara holds that this is possible.<sup>2</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> *Na hi sarva-kāmānām vimokhaḥ paramātma-sākṣātkāram antareṇa upapannaḥ*, Citsukha's *Tattva-pradīpikā*, (p. 395. Nirn. Sag. Edn.). Cf. *Bhāṣya* on *Yoga-sūtra* i. 16; *Jñānasyaiva parā kṣāṭhā vairāgyam*.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the non-Vedāntic schools of Indian thought, like the Sāṅkhya and Buddhism, also accept *jīvanmukti*.

does not, indeed, mean that all will attain it here and now; but the point is that, according to him, there is nothing inherent in the nature of the goal of perfection to prevent its achievement in the present life. He is well supported in this by the Upaniṣads which, though they also refer to *mokṣa* as taking place after death, contain several statements which show that it can be achieved here. One of the most explicit among them is the following: 'When all desires dwelling in the heart vanish, then a man becomes immortal; and (even) here reaches the goal.'<sup>1</sup> The other Vedāntins explain such statements as more or less rhetorical, and maintain that release is possible only after death. Even so great an authority as Āpastamba<sup>2</sup> ridicules the idea of achieving perfection when one, to all appearances, still continues to live under finite conditions. But Śaṅkara states, in one of the very few passages in which he seems to refer to his own experience, that the matter is one of personal knowledge and that it is not for another to deny it.<sup>3</sup> Even those who refuse to accept the possibility of *jīvanmukti*, as this is called, admit that man may reach so near to the ideal here that release will result *immediately after* physical death. What they insist therefore is only that the process of preparation should not cease *within* this life, but should continue till its end. According to Śaṅkara, on the other hand, there is no reason for such insistence because, if to realise the ultimate truth is the means to it, *mokṣa* must be achieved whenever such realisation takes place;<sup>4</sup> and there can be no interval between the two, as there can be none between the dawning of the day and the disappearance of darkness. One can understand the view that the ideal can never be actualised by us, for it seems to be in its very nature to recede as we pursue it; but, if it is granted that it is achievable, it is hard to see why its attainment should invariably be after this life. This question, it is obvious, touches the conception of the ideal intimately; and it is scarcely necessary to point out that the positivistic view of

<sup>1</sup> *Kaṭha Up.* II. iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Dharma-sūtra*, II. xxi. 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Com. on Vedānta-sūtra*, IV. i. 15. This does not make it subjective, for it has the support of *truti*.

<sup>4</sup> See Śaṅkara on *Vedānta-sūtra*, III. iii. 32. It is virtually the goal, according to him, and *mokṣa* in the eschatological sense automatically follows after death. Cf. *Vimuktaiś ca vimucyate*: *Kaṭha Up.* II. ii. 1.

*mokṣa* advocated by Śaṅkara, makes a greater appeal for man than the eschatological one.

Here the question may be asked whether such complete intuitive knowledge of reality as is required for *mokṣa* can be attained in the present life. The answer to this question depends upon what we understand by the term 'knowledge' in this context. It refers, no doubt, to reality as a whole. But what aspect or aspects of it precisely are intended to be understood by it? It is often assumed that it should comprehend *all* details concerning it. If it does, there is probably something to be said against the conception of *jīvanmukṭi*, because it is inconceivable how all details relating to the whole of reality—past and future, far and near—can be comprehended by any one in this life. But there is truly no warrant for such an assumption. The knowledge is only of the *essence* of reality—such essence as is suggested by the well-known examples given in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. i) to illustrate its all-pervasiveness, for instance, the substance gold in all golden things. To take the advaitic doctrine, with which we are at present concerned, the truth taught in the Upaniṣads is the oneness of all with the Absolute. Now to intuit this truth, in our sense of the word, is to realise that oneness within one's own experience. Its realisation may be far from easy, but there is nothing impossible in it. The correctness of this view is vouched for by recognised exponents of the doctrine. One of them, interpreting the *Chāndogya* passage in question, 'When the self is known *all* is known,' writes that the word 'all' there refers only to the inner essence of all things and is not intended to signify the knowledge of each one of them in its individual and accidental form.<sup>1</sup> No objection, on this score, can therefore be urged against the ideal of *jīvanmukṭi*.

It is desirable to add a few words in elucidation of this ideal. We should not think that, in the view of those that uphold it, progress and perfection are conceptions pointing to the same level of experience. The one takes place in time; the other signifies transcending it. As Prof. Radhakrishnan says, perfection is not attained within the time order or within the limits of the

<sup>1</sup> *Sarva-padasya sarva-tattva-paraṭvena tattadasādhāraṇarūpeṇa sarva-jñānasya avivakṣitatvāt: Siddhānta-leśa-saṃgraha*—(Kumbhakonam Edn.), p. 62. (com.). See also *Pañcadaśī*, xiii. 54 ff.

historical process. It is 'victory over time, a triumphant passage from the historical to the superhistorical'.<sup>1</sup> That is, perfection is not to be understood as taking place gradually or step by step, but in a flash at some point during the progress. This is the significance of the scriptural passage, quoted by Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Kātha Upaniṣad*,<sup>2</sup> which means that the knower 'arrives at the goal without travelling'. It does not consist in moving towards a goal, but is a mere change of outlook.<sup>3</sup> Progress and perfection are, indeed, related to each other, but only as time is related to eternity, where eternity is not everlasting time but what transcends it; and that relation cannot obviously be temporal. There is certainly a long course of preliminary discipline prescribed for reaching the goal; but, as Śaṅkara is never tired of reminding us, it serves only as an indirect aid. Or, as we might put it, the discipline is merely for gathering the spiritual momentum needed for rising above the stream of time. This kind of sudden transformation in us occurs whenever any of the higher values is realised; but while in the other cases we catch but a fleeting glimpse of the perfect state, here it is attained once and for all. We touch the ideal there, but fall away from it soon. Here there is no such lapse.

A person that has attained *jīvanmukti* does not abandon activity if, indeed, it is possible for anybody to do so; but the activity becomes wholly impersonal, and he responds to presented situations without relating them to himself. It is this transcending of all subjective or personal valuation which is the significance of the Upanishadic saying<sup>4</sup> that a knower is not troubled by thoughts like 'Have I not done the right?' or 'Have I done the wrong?' It means that he rises above the moods of self-approbation and self-condemnation, and not that he ceases from acting. The freed or perfected man thus does not lead a passive life. Nor is his attitude towards the world one of pessimistic fatalism, as it is too commonly assumed. That is clear from our characterisation of *mokṣa* as a state of supreme bliss; and there are many passages, like the song of the soul's unity in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III. x), which revel in describing the peaceful state

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy*, (1937), p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> *Anadhvagāḥ adhoṣu pārayiṣṇavaḥ* (I. iii. 12).

<sup>3</sup> *Avagatireva gatiḥ* (Ibid.).

<sup>4</sup> *Tait. Up.* II. 9.

of the knower. There are again *saṁnyāsins*, still among us, who are the embodiment not only of loving kindness for all, but also of detached joy of which the serene smile that ever plays on their lips is a sure sign.

(2) We have thus seen that there is nothing in the nature of *mokṣa* which necessarily makes it attainable only in a future life. The second point, which I like to mention, relates to the question whether this ideal is such as can be achieved by one and all or only by some; and, if the former, whether it is to be attained by individuals separately and in isolation from the rest or by all together. This is a detail about which also the Vedāntins have not arrived at any definite conclusion. According to certain schools, like the Dvaita, some are eternally bound; of the remaining schools some maintain that release is for all but that it is for each separately; and others that no one, whatever his qualifications and however far he may advance on the path to it, will attain *mokṣa* until all are qualified for it. The last is what is generally known as the ideal of *sarva-mukṭi* or universal release. Unlike *jīvanmukṭi*, there has been a long and keen controversy about it even among the advaitins; but it is clear that there can be no other conception of freedom which makes a wider appeal. The belief of the Indian in the *ḥarma* doctrine which, in its prevalent form, holds each person responsible for whatever he is now or may ever become hereafter may suggest that the conception of release should be individualistic.<sup>1</sup> But several great thinkers have believed in *sarva-mukṭi*, and there are various ways of conceiving the possibility of it recorded in old Sanskrit works. Of these, I shall refer here to one that is least dependent upon the technical postulates of Vedānta.

Long prior to the time of Śaṁkara, there flourished a Vedāntic thinker, named Bhartṛprapañca.<sup>2</sup> He also was a monist, like Śaṁkara; but he advocated what is known as the *bhedābheda* view. That is, though he believed in the sole reality of Brahman, he, unlike Śaṁkara, found a place for all variety in it. According to him there is only one soul, but it functions in many

<sup>1</sup> This, of course, does not mean that society is neglected, as is clear from the insistence on altruistic service in the training qualifying for release.

<sup>2</sup> See *Indian Antiquary* for April 1924, for an outline of the views of this thinker. Cf. Nṛsiṁhāśramin's *Vedānta-tattva-viveka*, pp. 34-8. (Chowkhambā Series).

centres. The common notion of a plurality of souls is due to this functional divergence and the mistaking of a temporary focusing of experience for the permanent individuality of the experient. But really this individuality only represents one of the numerous points where the single soul operates. Or to express the same in a different manner, the only soul that is, the world-soul or the cosmic soul as we may term it for convenience in referring to it, reveals itself simultaneously through several bodily organisms. A giant banyan tree, judged by its secondary trunks standing apart, may appear to be many; but it is really one for they all meet at the top, the seeming trunks being only roots that grow in the air instead of under the ground. There is nothing novel in this notion of one and the same soul being in relation with many bodies for, according to the *harma* doctrine, a single soul is regarded as assuming different bodily frames in different births, though the bodies there are conceived as succeeding one another *only in time* and not, as here, as coexisting *in space also*. If thus there is only one soul to be liberated, the so-called individual *jīvas*, which are but partial and provisional manifestations of it, can only contribute towards its liberation, which will not obviously result until the effort in that direction of the last *jīva* is successful. All of them should strive, but it is for a common end that they should do so. This unity of purpose, however, is only from the standpoint of *mokṣa*. In regard to other purposes relating to moral or material welfare, the *jīvas* manifestly differ; and their difference, so far, is admitted to be real.<sup>1</sup> That is, while every person feels, and feels rightly, that he has his own specific aims to achieve, that feeling is wrong, if entertained towards the final aim of life, because he cannot secure it apart from the rest. In this twofold aim, he resembles, we may say, a planet which, while moving on its own axis, also moves, in accordance with the constitution of the solar system, about the sun as all the other planets do.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is expressed by saying that, though *avidyā* is one, the internal organs (*antaḥ-karāṇas*) are many. Brahman becomes the cosmic soul through the adjunct of *avidyā*, and it is split up into a manifold of *jīvas* through the different internal organs. The *jīvas* thus have two adjuncts. In Śaṅkara's Advaita, the second of these is traced to the first, so that they are conditioned ultimately by only one adjunct, viz., *avidyā*.

<sup>2</sup> The adoption of this double attitude by Bhartṛprapañca towards the

A necessary corollary to this view is that the achievement of the final ideal requires a twofold discipline. The first part of it is for overcoming narrow attachment (*asāṅga*), which is the source of man's wrong belief that he is essentially different from others. He should therefore first rise from this false belief to a consciousness of the underlying unity of all. And the means to it is devotion to social morality and meditation on the truth that there is but one and only one soul, though it shows itself as manifold. It is the conviction that the souls are many and are only externally related to one another that is the source of much, if not of all, moral evil. When that conviction is replaced by the contrary one that they are but the same, the moral evil practically disappears. It is only when this unity of all the selves has been realised, not only in thought but also in fact, and man has shaken off the burden of a separate self that he will be able to work for the further and final ideal of spiritual freedom. If we start with the notions of matter, finite selves, the cosmic soul and the infinite spirit, we may say that the object of the preliminary training is to realise the ultimate oneness of all finite selves with the cosmic soul. The aim of the second part of the discipline is the realisation of the ultimate unity of all Being, including matter, and of that Being as the infinite spirit. The discipline of the second stage also consists in work and meditation; but it is not necessary to enter into further details. It will suffice to observe that a person, who has experienced his identity with the cosmic soul, will necessarily be actuated by universal love, and that, there being nothing to disquiet him except the consciousness that there are others who have yet to realise the same identity, his main concern then will be to assist them in doing so.

What we have to note particularly in connection with this view is that man must disabuse his mind once for all of the notion that he can reach his spiritual goal apart from others.

self makes his view better than the other views of universal release now commonly known. It avoids the solipsistic position of those that maintain the possibility of such release on the basis of one *jīva* alone, and explain the belief that there are many *jīvas* as purely a delusion. If to avoid this difficulty, the *jīva* is taken to be *in reality* but one, though *appearing* as many, we should be in the self-stultifying position that when one strives for and attains *mokṣa*, all will be released: *Mumir manute mūrkhō mucyate*, as an old saying has it.

To say that one's salvation is one's own concern is like saying that the heart or the lungs have their own end to achieve independently of that of the bodily organism as a whole. Whatever separate purpose they may serve is only contributory to *its* well-being. The excellence of this position consists in the fact that it gives no room for the charge that may be brought against the other ideal of isolated release. Whatever may be the extent of altruistic service involved in the training necessary for reaching it, there is no question that that ideal is eventually individualistic. But here it is not so at all. Every one, who is qualified, works for the perfection of all; and he does so with the full conviction that he has nothing to gain thereby for himself exclusively. Here we have a parallel to the Gītā teaching of selfless duty. It asks man to do his duty without any reference whatsoever to his personal interests. The same principle of detached action is, in this view, extended to the higher aim of *mokṣa*. The teaching of the Gītā is to be followed here also, but not for achieving one's own salvation, as it is usually explained; it is rather for acquiring the fitness to work for the ultimate purpose of universal perfection.

Thus we see that, although the view that *mokṣa* is the highest ideal has been accepted by all Indian thinkers, and the Vedāntins among them are also agreed as regards certain important features of it like its positive and blissful character, there are details relating to it which remain still unsettled. These details, to judge from the instances just given, are such as will, when determined, not only clarify the ideal but also inspire man with fresh motives for responding readily to its call. That man should still be far from the goal of life is not so surprising, for he is governed not only by his spiritual but also by his animal nature. What is surprising is that, with all the attention which the best minds have devoted to it for so long, even the nature of the ideal should be yet not completely known.<sup>1</sup> The ordinary view that it is known and is embodied in the triad of values—the good, the beautiful and the true—is, as we have seen, not correct. Until the ideal becomes quite clear in all its important aspects, we cannot expect true or steady progress towards it to

<sup>1</sup> On the Indian side, the very divergence in the conception of *mokṣa* shows this.



be made. But its further determination, it should be plain from what has been stated so far, does not depend upon mere speculation; it depends also upon an earnest pursuit of it on the practical side, as far as it has been envisaged. That is how the ideal has hitherto been ascertained. Mere theoretical advance is not of much avail; and advance on the practical side only, though certainly more useful, cannot by itself lead to the final goal. It is only when both theory and practice are pressed into service that, on the Indian view, any genuine progress in our knowledge of it can be made. As the nature of the final goal becomes clearer and better understood in consequence of this twofold endeavour, we may be sure that man's march towards it will be less slow and less chequered than it has hitherto been.

## ŚAMKARA'S CONCEPTION OF ULTIMATE VALUE

A well-known professor of philosophy has divided master minds into two classes—one which is absorbed so intensely in the solution of some theoretical problem that its outer life becomes quite unimportant; and the other, which enters fully into the practical struggles of the age in which it lives but, without losing itself in them, succeeds in making a contribution of permanent significance to the history of human culture. Of these two classes, Śaṁkara, belongs to the second. He was a great reformer and the direction, which he gave to his generation in matters social and religious, continues to guide the life and regulate the conduct of multitudes of people even now, after the lapse of many centuries. He was at the same time a great thinker also who, though not claiming to have done anything more than elucidating what was already there in the Vedas and Vedic tradition, was virtually the originator of a new movement in philosophy. I propose to say a few words this evening on Śaṁkara's philosophy. On an occasion like this, it would perhaps have been more appropriate if I had chosen as my subject his life and work, and referred to the philosophy he taught, only by the way. But unfortunately that course was not possible since, as in the case of the other great men of ancient India, there is little that is authentically known about him. There are, no doubt, many accounts of his life and doings current among the people; and even biographies of him written in Sanskrit are not rare to find. But the Indian mind, in its great admiration for his genius, has woven so many legends into them all that it is difficult to discover the facts which they may contain.

The particular aspect of Śaṁkara's philosophy I have selected is his conception of ultimate value. The subject of value is a vast and difficult one as shown, for example, by the amount of attention paid to it in recent times in the West. But I do not intend to enter into the intricacies of this problem, even in its bearing on Śaṁkara's philosophy, but shall confine myself to only a few general points in it. I use the word 'value' for what is described as *puruṣārtha* in Sanskrit—a word which, as is well known, denotes the four-fold group of *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*. It is difficult to render these terms accurately into

English; but their general meaning may be indicated easily enough. The first two of these, viz., *artha* and *kāma* stand respectively for what are known as the 'economic' and the 'hedonistic' good—'the useful' and 'the pleasant', as we may otherwise express them; *dharma*, in its narrower connotation, means religious merit (*puṇya*); but it may be taken to comprehend the 'moral good' also, since ethical behaviour is indispensable to it on the principle enunciated by ancient lawgivers that '*dharma* turns away from those that are wanting in good conduct';<sup>1</sup> and lastly *mokṣa* represents what may be described as 'spiritual good'. Thus of the three values of 'the beautiful', 'the good' and 'the true', commonly recognised in the West, we find here the second, 'the good'; and we may say that 'the true' also is there, included under *mokṣa*, since all schools of thought that acknowledge *mokṣa* agree that it is the result of realising the ultimate truth, however much they may differ from one another in their views regarding the precise nature of that truth. Of the familiar 'trinity of values', 'the beautiful' should be taken as excluded from this list unless we bring it under *kāma*, a course which, in view of the disinterestedness characterising its appreciation, does not appear to be at all right. It looks therefore that its omission is deliberate; and there is at least one statement traditionally handed down about poetry which implies that the Indian Philosopher, in the age of the systems, took much the same view of art as Plato seems to have done in ancient Greece. But it should be added that the question of beauty in nature or in art, though passed over by the philosophers, was by no means neglected in India. It was taken up for investigation by a different section of thinkers, among whom the Ālaṅkārikas, or writers on Poetics, occupy a conspicuous place. This is, however, a point which it is not necessary to pursue further for our present purpose.

Before I enter upon the subject proper of this Paper, it is necessary to say a few words about the Indian conception of values in general. The Sanskrit term *puruṣārtha* is explained as

<sup>1</sup> See *Parāśara-smṛti*, i.

*ācārabhraṣṭa-dehānām bhaved dharmāḥ parāṇmukhaḥ |  
caturṇām api varṇānām ācāro dharma-pālakaḥ ||*

Cf. *Vasiṣṭha-dharma-sūtra*, vi. 3. *ācārahīnaḥ na punanti Vedāḥ.*

'what is sought by men'; and from this explanation, we may deduce certain important conclusions about the nature of values:

(1) The first of them is that by value we should understand an end or consummation and that the end or consummation should be such as is pursued by men. Lower animals also pursue ends, but they are not aware that they do so, as self-conscious man is. It is those ends only which are consciously chosen that are to be regarded as *puruṣārthas*. Some modern thinkers include under this head not only such ends but also those that are described as 'values of natural election'. A creeper by the side of a tree grows twining itself round it in preference to other objects that may lie near by; and even inanimate things seem to show similar preferences. Iron filings, it has been said, are no more indifferent to magnets than hungry men are to loaves. This extension of the meaning of value seems, for the most part, to be a matter of terminology; and there can be no harm in regarding all objects—whether animate or inanimate—as manifesting at least a rudimentary form of valuation. Human action also sometimes exhibits such implicit valuation as, for instance, when we dislike what is bitter and reject it automatically. But the point for us to note is that that is not what is meant by the term *puruṣārtha*, and that values, as understood by Indian philosophers, are only human values.

(2) Secondly value, because it is defined as what is sought, implies that it is something we aspire for and do not already possess. It is not what has been, but is yet to be, realised. Such a characterisation of value signifies that there must be an obstacle, to be overcome, in some sense or other, before it is realised. The obstacle, however, should not be absolute or insurmountable for in that case there would be no incentive to try at all. 'Where there is no way' as Geulinx said, 'there can be no will'. This is expressed in Sanskrit by the word *kṛti-sādhya* or, more briefly, *sādhya* which may be taken as equivalent to 'rationally willed'—an idea which underlies, for instance, the use of the English expression 'crying for the moon' in the sense of seeking an impossibility. Theoretically therefore there may be values that are not realisable, giving rise to ineffectual longing, but strictly it is a misnomer to call them so.

(3) The next point that follows from the above description

of *puruṣārtha* is the distinction between what is sought by man and what ought to be sought by him. In one case, he is prompted to activity by natural impulses; but in the other, it is his rational or spiritual nature that influences him. There are thus two classes of values, one lower than the other. We may term them respectively as empirical and real or spiritual values; and one of the great mistakes ordinarily made is to confound one of them with the other. *Artha* and *kāma* belong to the former class; and *dharma* and *mokṣa*, to the latter. This classification gives rise to more than one problem of great importance and interest, e.g., the mutual relation that exists or should exist between the two classes of values and between the pairs constituting each class. To one or two of them, we shall have occasion to refer in the sequel. Of these two classes of values, we are concerned in philosophy more with the spiritual than with the empirical values.

(4) The last deduction to be made is that a value, being an end, implies the selection of suitable means for its attainment. These means should themselves be regarded as valuable in some sense, since what are serviceable in realising values cannot be wholly valueless. From this arises the distinction of instrumental and ultimate values, or of utilities and consummations, as they are sometimes called. The latter are sought for their own sake, but the former are sought for the sake of something else. We stated that man makes a grievous mistake when he regards empirical values as real values. The mistake of looking upon a means as an end is not less so. But we must remember that 'end' and 'means' are relative terms and that what is an end may conceivably become a means to the realisation of a further end. Hence it is necessary to carefully define these terms in any particular case. It is this vagueness inherent in the notions of 'end' and 'means' that explains the double character of some *puruṣārthas*. Thus *artha* is ordinarily acquired for *kāma* among empirical values; but the miser makes it an end by acquiring it not for using it but for the sole purpose of having it.

In the light of this general characterisation of *puruṣārthas*, we shall consider in some detail the two values of *dharma* and *mokṣa* with which philosophy is mainly concerned; and we shall confine our attention in doing so to the systems of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. We may begin with *dharma* which, as already stated, stands for moral and religious values. It is regarded as *sādhya*

or what has to be accomplished. It means, as Śabara Svāmī<sup>1</sup> says, that it is a future possibility; and that it does not, at the time of being known, yet pertain to the sphere of fact. It also represents an ultimate end, but only according to some Mīmāṃsakas. It is, in their view, intrinsically worthy, and is to be sought as an end in itself—not as a means to anything else. This view will become clear if we contrast it with that of the other Mīmāṃsakas. According to the latter, the inducement to action is either the attainment of pleasure or the avoidance of pain; and if *dharma* is followed, it is for the sake of securing one or both of these ends. *Dharma* consequently becomes not an end in itself but a means to happiness. This amounts to making it instrumental to *kāma*, though by the latter term we have to understand not what it commonly means but pleasure that is to be enjoyed, generally speaking, in a very remote future. It is such happiness, or *svarga* as it is ordinarily called, that constitutes the ultimate end in this view; and it is this hedonistic aim that the other Mīmāṃsakas totally repudiate. The only motive they recognise is regard for duty, or, *kāryatā-jñāna* as they put it. If we represent *dharma* as 'duty', this school stands for the well-known principle of duty being its own reward. Such an attitude towards *dharma*—whether regarded as an end in itself or as a means to *svarga*—implies that there is no place for the fourth value of *mokṣa* in the system; and, as a matter of fact, early Mīmāṃsakas reckoned only three *puruṣārthas*—sometimes designated as *tri-varga* or 'the triad of values', viz., *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma*.

It is not, however, to be understood from this that the ideal of *mokṣa* had not been formulated when the above view of *dharma* prevailed for we know that it is, at least, as old as the Upaniṣads; only it did not commend itself to the Mīmāṃsakas. That ideal was, from the earliest times, acknowledged by the Vedāntins. Thus there was in early times a difference of opinion among Indian thinkers as to what the ultimate human value was—some holding that it was *mokṣa*; and others, that it was *dharma* or *svarga* of which it was the necessary means. But the ideal of *mokṣa* gradually gained in influence and, in course of time, completely superseded *dharma* so that even the Mīmāṃsakas

<sup>1</sup> *Bhaviṣyanti caipo'rthah na jñāna-kāle asti*. I. i. 4.

came to look upon it as representing the true end of man. One result of this change was the subordination of *dharma* to *mokṣa*, and its utilisation as a means of moral purification. This 'cleansing of the heart' or *sattva-buddhi* as it is described had all along been recognised by the Vedāntins as a necessary pre-condition for entering upon the path of *mokṣa*, and the Upaniṣads often dwell on it. To refer to only a single passage out of several that occur to one's mind: The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (ii. 24) says 'No one who has not ceased from wickedness, who is restless, unsubdued, whose heart is not yet tranquil, can realise this self'. This circumstance explains the new use to which *dharma* was put when it was subordinated to *mokṣa*. Henceforth these ideals cease to be distinct; and the two together define the entire scope of man's spiritual life. This marks a profound change in the Indian conception of values for *dharma* which, as originally understood by the Mīmāṃsakas, was partly moral and partly ritualistic is hereby transformed into a wholly ethical means. The whole content of the *Karma-kāṇḍa* of the Veda thus becomes rationalised; and we may perhaps hazard a conjecture that this re-valuation of ritual largely accounts for the gradual falling into disuse of many a Vedic sacrifice involving *himsā* or injury to animals. This change in the conception of values illustrates a favourite method of the Indian—that of not discarding old ideals when they come to be superseded, but utilising them in a new manner—a method indicative of a conservative bent of mind; and it explains much of the excellence that is peculiar to Indian culture. The best presentation of this altered conception of *dharma*, as is well known, is found in the *Gītā*, and the general acceptance of it should be ascribed to the influence of that great work; but the change in the philosophic standpoint, which it signifies, is really much older.

The Vedāntic conception of *mokṣa* as an ultimate value is similar to the Mīmāṃsaka's conception of *dharma* as described above. Broadly speaking, the Vedāntins hold that it is *sādhya*. But they maintain that it is not to be generated anew like *dharma* because, according to all of them, it means merely the restoration of the individual to what is his true spiritual status. The condition of *mokṣa* is looked upon as normal; and that of *saṁsāra*, as a lapse from it. It is to enable man to recover this status that the several schools of Vedānta prescribe courses of discipline which are

more or less distinct. This discipline, though it does not engender *mokṣa* results in an actual change. It means, according to some, a change of place and time for the individual self, but it does not affect its essence. It does not create, but only rearranges what is already there. Thus in Rāmānuja's doctrine, liberation means reaching the presence of the Most High; and the individual self can do so only after it succeeds in winning divine grace which is one of the necessary conditions of it. According to others, like Bhāskara, it means a transformation in the very character of the self. But in either case, we have to note that *mokṣa* is an event which actually happens.

Śaṅkara, while agreeing with the other Vedāntins generally in their conception of *mokṣa*, differs from them in one important respect. He does not hold that it is *sādhya* in the common acceptance of that term. It is not brought into being anew like *dharma*; nor does it involve a modification in the character of the individual self or any readjustment of its relation to the highest principle in the universe, as other Vedāntins think. It is *siddha* or self-existent, according to him. Śaṅkara admits that values like *dharma* and *kāma* may have to be accomplished in the literal sense of the term, but what he objects to is that they must necessarily be so. In order to understand this unique view, we have to recall to mind the Advaitic conception of ultimate truth whose realisation constitutes *mokṣa*. It is the identity, as is well known, of the individual soul and Brahman. The former is not, according to this system, other than the Absolute. It is not, as it is apt to be mistaken, a false view of Brahman but only a distorted view of it. Śaṅkara has illustrated this point in the very beginning of his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* by means of the illusion of the single moon appearing as two. When this illusion disappears, it is only the duality that disappears and not the moon also. Similarly, when *mokṣa* is attained, the self of the individual does not disappear but only its finitude does—the finitude which does not really belong to it and which we, in our ignorance, attribute to it. It is the seeming skirts of the self that fuse, as we may say, and it immediately comes to be recognised in its intrinsic form as the sole reality. The condition of *mokṣa* thus differs from *saṁsāra* merely in a change of outlook, and there is no factual change whatsoever. It is in this sense that *mokṣa* is



stated to be *siddha* and not *sādhya*. The reason for maintaining such a view is that, if *mokṣa* should be eternal as it is admitted to be by all philosophers, it cannot be produced for what is produced or effected, being dependent upon the aids to its effectuation, should necessarily be temporal.

This view, however, raises an important question, viz., that being *siddha* or ever-achieved, *mokṣa* ceases to be a value according to our characterisation of it. If all values are *sādhya*, and if *mokṣa* in the Advaitic doctrine is admitted to be not so, how can we regard it as a value? We have to go back to the conception of *puruṣārtha* to find an answer to this objection. The notion of value, we said, implies the need for overcoming some resistance or other before it is realised. But this overcoming, according to the other Vedāntins, is of a twofold character. One is the removal of whatever hindrance there is in the way of *mokṣa*; and the other, the bringing about of the positive change or readjustment which it connotes, in their view. According to Śaṁkara, on the other hand, the removal of the hindrance is all that is necessary, for there is, as we just pointed out, no change of any kind to be brought about in the existent reality. *Mokṣa* means the revelation of the intrinsic nature of *ātman*; and, as it is self-manifesting, it requires no direct aid whatsoever for revealing itself. It shines by its own light, when once the obstruction to its full manifestation is removed. To take an instance from the physical realm: When the moon, by a proper shifting of its position, ceases to intervene, there is nothing more to be done for the eclipsed sun to appear in all its splendour. In other words, the process of realisation is, in this view, to be interpreted in an indirect sense. Only we should remember that the obstacle to be removed, viz., *Māyā*, or 'the cloud of unknowing' is here conceived as unreal or illusory. It is in this special sense that *mokṣa* is to be described as *sādhya* and regarded as a value in Advaita. According to Śaṁkara therefore the term *sādhya* should be understood in a wider sense, so that it may apply to cases where there is nothing to be directly achieved, and where even the indirect achievement consists only in the accomplishment of what seems to be unaccomplished. In other words, Advaitic *mokṣa* consists, as we have already stated, in

overcoming an illusion. An important result of this view is that *mokṣa* becomes identified with the 'liberated' self; and the latter, in consequence, with the highest value. Śaṅkara says 'Brahman itself is the state of *mokṣa*' where 'Brahman' is only another word for *ātman* or the self.<sup>1</sup> The Advaitin does not, we should add, deny the need for effort in securing final freedom. The only way of dispelling an illusion is, no doubt, to discover the truth; and the process of removing *Māyā* therefore involves knowing and not acting. But effort is necessary for putting oneself on the right path leading to the truth. The effort, which is partly ethical and partly mental, is, however, solely to remove the illusory veil and thereby give scope for the self to reveal itself. It is the self, which is thus revealed and which has existed from eternity, that constitutes the ultimate value according to Śaṅkara.

There is a familiar, but somewhat difficult, section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II. iv)<sup>1</sup> where this truth of the self being the highest value is inculcated. It is named Maitreyī-Brāhmaṇa after one of the wives of the great Upaniṣadic seer, Yājñavalkya. Yājñavalkya had two wives, Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī. Of these, Maitreyī was of an enquiring turn of mind; but Kātyāyanī, as the Upaniṣad puts it, knew only what women know. When, at a certain stage of his life, Yājñavalkya resolved to renounce the world, he said: 'Maitreyī, I shall soon cease to be a householder and shall therefore divide my property between thee and Kātyāyanī'. But Maitreyī could not make out why Yājñavalkya should think of transferring to her what he himself was going to abandon. She therefore asked him whether, if the whole earth with all its riches belonged to her, she would thereby become immortal? 'By no means,' replied Yājñavalkya in a phrase that has become classical, 'there is no hope of immortality through riches'. Maitreyī then said, 'What shall I do with that whereby I do not become immortal? Teach me rather what thou knowest'. Yājñavalkya was right glad at this, and said to Maitreyī 'Lo dear to me art thou and dear is what thou sayest. Come, seat thyself, I shall explain it to thee; and, while I do so, ponder thereon'. Yājñavalkya did not, of course, mean to transfer to others what he regarded as a burden to himself. His proposal

was only a test to find out the fitness of Maitreyī to receive so important a truth, and indicates to us what Śamkara regards as one of the chief lessons of the section in question, viz., that *virakti* or absolute detachment is essential to those that seek self-knowledge.

This is a section which may be, and has actually been, interpreted in more ways than one. We are concerned here with Śamkara's interpretation; and we shall content ourselves with dwelling on one passage in it which is central for our purpose. The passage begins thus: 'Verily, not for the good of the husband is a husband dear, but for the good of the self is he dear; verily, not for the good of the wife is a wife dear, but for the good of the self is she dear; verily, not for the good of the sons are sons dear, but for the good of the self are they dear; verily, not for the good of wealth is wealth dear, but for the good of the self is it dear'; and after some more statements of a similar import, it concludes thus—'Verily, not for the good of all is all dear, but for the good of the self is it dear. It is the self that should be seen,—that should be learnt, that should be understood, that should be meditated upon, O Maitreyī; when the self is seen, is learnt, is understood and is meditated upon, all this world becomes known'. According to Śamkara, the earlier statements here mean that the objects mentioned in them are not, in the last instance, loved for their own sake but for the sake of the self. Now, if a thing is good *for* something else, it is that something which constitutes the true end; and since everything in the world is stated here to get its worth in reference to the self, the self must be the object of ultimate value.

It is easy to misunderstand this teaching, for it appears to reduce all altruism to selfishness. So it is necessary to find out what exactly it means. The first point to be noted is that the teaching does not question that what we knowingly seek in altruistic deeds is the good of others; and it does not therefore deny direct ethical value to such deeds. What it denies is that the value of the objects, whose interests are intended to be served by them, can be absolute or intrinsic. Secondly, we have to note that the good of the self which the Upaniṣad here represents as the ultimate end, unlike that of other objects, is one which man does not of himself choose; he is rather driven

towards it unawares. This lack of awareness differentiates it from selfishness, in which the idea of the end being for the self may well be present to the mind of the agent, though it need not always be so. To assume that this good also is consciously pursued would be to go against the whole purpose of the Upaniṣad, which is to enlighten us on this very point, viz., that there is such an end implicated in all our activities, including even unselfish ones. It is because of this ignorance that we regard such activities as ultimate ends, when in fact they are only means. But it may be asked how anything can be a value in the absence of conscious valuation. The answer is that the good in question is not at all meant to be regarded as a felt value. Things, however, do not cease to be valuable for us simply because we do not recognise that they are so; and the good, in the present case, moves us to action though we have no idea of it. All that we may say from this is that it is not a *puruṣārtha* in the sense referred to above; and the whole aim of the teaching, in drawing our attention to it, is to persuade us to transform it into a *puruṣārtha* by consciously following it.

But what is the self whose importance is thus emphasised here? We should remember that altruistic deeds such as those mentioned here, in addition to aiming at the furtherance of another's welfare, exhibit, as a rule, an element of self-sacrifice. The latter element shows that the self, reference to which is stated here to be an unvarying feature of all such deeds, cannot be the self as we commonly understand it. Let us take the case of a mother's love for her child. We may grant that her devotion to it is finally for the good of her own self; but, since the love imposes greater or less sacrifice on her, that self must be a deeper one than what she ordinarily takes it to be. It cannot, for example, stand for her 'bodily self' because, so far from finding its good always and necessarily thereby, she has often to forgo it on account of her love, however willingly she may do so. In the case of the martyr, to take a second instance, the sacrifice involved is of a different kind for it may mean not merely the disregarding of physical well-being but the giving up of life; and martyrdom forms no exception to the principle which is enunciated here as governing all actions. Other examples may be cited where other aspects of the egoistic

self are similarly disregarded, so that the self which is meant in this section cannot be taken as identical with it.

This conclusion is borne out by the last part of the passage quoted above, which mentions the need for investigating the nature of the self and points out the way to its realisation. If it were the common egoistic self that was intended, there would be no point in this part of the teaching. The self then which is intended here is not the individual subject; but, at the same time, it cannot be altogether different from it, for then the reference to the self of the agent would not at all characterise actions, as stated here. It must therefore be something which is the same and yet not the same as the ego; and from passages that follow in the Upaniṣad, it becomes clear that what is meant here is the universal spirit, which is immanent in the individual self as it is immanent in everything else. One of these passages (12) says, in respect of this spirit: 'It is like a lump of salt which, cast into the water, is lost in it and seems impossible to seize again; but wherever one may taste it, the water is salty, indeed'. It is in reference to this universal self that the passage quoted before states that, when it is realised, all this world becomes known. The good of the self here represented as ultimate is not therefore self-love in the vulgar employment of that expression. In view of the extended meaning that attaches to the word 'self' here, it should be called universal love—not in the sense of love for others *as such* but love for them *as oneself*. It is the former that is reduced here to the level of an instrumental value. That this is the truth about love underlying the teaching of this section, is expressed by Sureśvara in his usual impressive way, by making Yājñavalkya say, in his joy, to Maitreyī 'Pārvatī's love for Śiva has made her half of him; but your love, O Maitreyī is so great that you are claiming the whole of me'. (II. iv. 69).<sup>1</sup>

There is one other point to which I should allude before concluding. If the ultimate self, which according to Śaṁkara is *nirguṇa*, be identified with the highest value, one may ask, will not *mokṣa* mean the repudiation of all the values of life? The answer is that it does not, for the ultimate self, as conceived here, is not only *sat* and *cit* or 'being' and 'intelligence' but also *ānanda* or 'bliss'. Just as in Śaṁkara's philosophy on its onto-

<sup>1</sup> *Atisnehāpakṛṣṭo mā dehārtham śūlināś śrītā |*

*toam tu sarvātmanātmānam kṛtsnam mām prāptum icchasi ||*

logical side, the being of empirical objects points to and is dependent upon the Being that is the self, and on its epistemological side, empirical knowledge points to and is dependent upon the Experience that is the self; so in his philosophy on its axiological side, empirical happiness points to and is dependent upon the Bliss that is the self. The facts of being, of knowledge and of happiness, given in common experience, are different pathways which lead to the same ultimate reality. But we should not think that this difference in the ways of approach signifies the existence of different phases in that reality. The self has accordingly to be regarded, not as *sat* and *cit* and *ānanda* implying that it is something which is characterised by being, intelligence and bliss, but as either *sat* or *cit* or *ānanda*. It is not necessary for our purpose to consider the significance of the first two of these, viz., *sat* and *cit*. Confining our attention to *ānanda*, we shall point out briefly how the self comes to be identified with it, and what we have to understand from the identification.

In answering these questions, we have necessarily to begin with what is within our experience, viz., *kāma*. *Kāma* as an empirical value, as we have more than once stated, stands for pleasure or happiness; but this pleasure is fugitive. It needs an occasion for manifestation; and, sooner or later, it disappears. It also implies its opposite, viz., pain or misery. That is, our notion of pleasure is relative. It is the relativity of this pleasure that suggests to us an absolute bliss which is without any of its defects. The known fact that the former is a value accounts for our thinking of the latter also as a value; and, on account of its absoluteness, we take it as the highest value. Since the self also, as stated above, is such a value, the two become identical. The significance of their identification is that the ultimate self is not conceived here as the locus of value but as its very essence. It is true that such infinite and unmixed bliss may be looked upon as a bare idea or an abstraction; but, if there be any truth in the principle that the eternal is prior to the ephemeral, we have to regard it as real. The question is whether we should look for the source of common happiness in the perfect bliss of the *ātman* or regard that happiness as ultimate in itself, giving rise, at best, to a mere notion of perfect happiness. The solution of Advaita is that it is in every case an expression of the supreme *ānanda*. In fact, common happiness is the bliss of the *ātman*.

or Brahman itself appearing under empirical conditions. That is what the Upaniṣads mean when they declare that 'all empirical happiness is but a partial revelation of Brahman'.<sup>1</sup> The difference between one pleasure and another with which we are familiar in common life is based upon distinctions among the factors that occasion them, their duration etc. In itself all *ānanda* is the *ānanda* of Brahman, and there is no essential difference between the two. But this intimate relationship between them should not lead us to think that the bliss of Brahman can be represented in terms of empirical happiness. The latter, being derived from the former, may be said to be included in it; but it can be included in it only in the sense in which the finite is included in the infinite, so that the bliss of Brahman can never be made equivalent to an aggregate of earthly pleasures. Nor can the one be regarded, for reasons already mentioned, as different from the other. Hence we should conclude that *mokṣa* stands for a different order of experience which transcends it in all its forms. And, if to transcend is not the same as to negate, the Advaitic conception of *mokṣa* cannot be the repudiation of the values of life.

<sup>1</sup> *Br. Up.* IV. iii. 32.

## A NEGLECTED IDEAL OF LIFE

(*nivṛtti* tu mahāphalā)

In the beginning of his commentary on the Gītā, Śaṅkara mentions, as known from immemorial time, two types of discipline for attaining the goal of life, viz., *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. These two kinds of discipline, which correspond to what are described in English as 'activism' and 'asceticism', may be predominantly associated with the life of the householder (*gṛhastha*) and that of the recluse (*śaṁnyāsīn*). But these represent extreme positions; and, speaking generally, what is now commended is only a combination of them resulting in a well-balanced life. It shows that, according to the final Indian view, the opposition between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, as indicated by their names, is only apparent and that there is no unbridgeable gulf between them. Kālidāsa who, as the classic poet of India, may be taken to give expression to its best and highest ideal of life, beautifully suggests the inner harmony between them by describing in parallel terms in a series of stanzas the active and ascetic lives respectively of king Aja and his father, Raghu.<sup>1</sup> But this harmony is not merely a matter of poetic analogy. The Dharma-sūtra-kāras or Indian moralists also try to reconcile these *āśramas*, though there is considerable divergence of opinion among them in this respect.<sup>2</sup> It will suffice for our purpose to refer to only one of these views—the one that is generally followed even at the present time.

This view commends the adoption, after completing Vedic study, of the *āśramas* one after another, in the order in which they are commonly enumerated, viz., *gṛhasthya*, *vānaprastha* and *śaṁnyāsa*, the training of each being regarded as essential for assuming the next. This is known as 'the standpoint of combination' (*samuccaya-pakṣa*), for it utilises the training of *all* the stages. There is evidence to show that this practice was known in the age of the Upaniṣads. Yājñavalkya, we know, from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,<sup>3</sup> had for long been a householder before he became a *śaṁnyāsīn*. Here is an attempt made to

<sup>1</sup> *Raghu-vaṁśa*, viii. 16-23.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g., *Gautama-dharma-sūtra*, (Mysore Oriental Library Edn.) iii. 1. (com.). <sup>3</sup> II. v.



reconcile the activistic with the ascetic ideal; but the one is subordinated to the other, for the active life of the earlier *āśramas* is conceived as finally qualifying for the ascetic life of the last. That is to say, the relation between the two is external, since the life of total self-denial is to begin only *after* the stage of active life.

We are not, however, concerned now so much with this general reconciliation of the ideals of the several *āśramas*, but with the life of the householder in its relation to *niṛṛtti*. But before dealing with it, it is desirable to refer to an important point, viz., the exact significance of the term *niṛṛtti* as used here. It is well known that even the life of a householder involves numerous checks on natural impulses, and therefore implies the necessity for exercising a good deal of self-denial and self-control. In fact, no virtue is conceivable without resistance to desire; and, so far, *pravṛtti* necessarily includes *niṛṛtti*. But what is meant by the latter term here is very much more; it is not partial, but complete abnegation. It stands for the spirit of *saṁnyāsa*, though it may not wear its form. It is in reference to such total self-abnegation that we have now to consider the life of the householder. *Niṛṛtti*, in this absolute sense, has no place, according to the above view, *within* the householder's life; and no attempt is made to synthesise the principle of active life as a whole with the principle of asceticism. It merely represents an attempt to correlate the different orders of life.

The question that we have to ask is whether any attempt at such a synthesis was at all made in ancient India. The answer that springs at once to our mind is that it has been effected in the *Gītā* teaching of *niṣkāma-karma* or 'disinterested activity'. That teaching, no doubt, is not meant to be applicable specifically to the householder's life; it applies to all the *āśramas*, and therefore to *gārhaṣṭhya* also. As in the case of the other *āśramas*, the householder also is here bidden to engage himself in his activities without any desire whatsoever for their fruit. That is absolute self-denial, blending and interfusing with active life—an ideal whose formulation is one of India's most signal contributions to world thought. The teaching, however, is so familiar that it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon it at any length. There is another which is similar, but not commonly known; and our chief purpose here is to draw attention to this forgotten teaching.

It is compendiously indicated in the following quotation from *Manu-smṛiti*:<sup>1</sup>

*Pravṛttir eṣā bhūtānāṃ niṛttis tu mahāphalā*||

(‘To act thus is natural to man; but conscious restraint leads to a higher goal.’)

This half-stanza occurs in the section devoted to the elucidation of the duties of a householder.<sup>2</sup> The immediate context in which it appears is that of food, permitted and forbidden; but, as commentators point out,<sup>3</sup> it is to be understood as referring not merely to the partaking of food, but to a whole class of actions of which it is only a sample. In order to know what these actions are, it is necessary first to distinguish between those that are prescribed (*vihita*) and those that are not. If we exclude the former, which are a matter of obligation and should in any case be done, we are left with activities, all of which issue from pure inclination. Of them again, some are explicitly prohibited (*pratiśiddha*), and are therefore to be abstained from. It is to the remaining sphere of actions that the above rule of Manu applies. He regards it as permissible for the householder to engage himself in them; only he adds that turning away from them is a *greater* merit. That is, he places *niṛtti* higher: *niṛttis tu mahāphalā*. It is well known that the *Gītā* is averse to all attempts at the gratification of selfish desire (*kāma-cāra*); and its teaching may, for that reason, be described as much too rigorous. Manu is more considerate in this respect. Like all moral teachers, he also is quite strict in regard to desistance from prohibited deeds; but he does not impose the same restriction on other activities. That is, he finds room for what is now called ‘enlightened self-interest’ or ‘reasonable self-love’ in the life of a householder, on the principle that it is natural for him to seek after it: *Pravṛttir eṣā bhūtānāṃ*. Instead of prescribing a uniform course of discipline for *all* men, as the *Gītā* does, Manu recognises a distinction of moral capacity among them, and adjusts his teaching accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> v. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. iii-v.

<sup>3</sup> *Pradarśanārtham etat. Aśiṣṭāpratiśiddha-viṣayāṇāṃ anyāsāṃ api niṛttinām evam eva. (Medhātithi).*

<sup>4</sup> Commentators differ in the explanation of this stanza. The above interpretation is based chiefly upon the *Kullūkabhaṭṭiya*. Cf. Kumārila’s *Tantravārttika*, I. iii. 4.

We may thus speak, according to Manu, of a higher and a lower morality in reference to the householder—the latter being meant for average men, the former for those who are ethically more advanced among householders. The path of complete *niṛṛtti* may suit the few; it is the path of *pravr̥tti* that fits the many. But we should add that the latter is described as 'lower' in no derogatory sense. It has its own excellence which is, by no means, small; and there is hardly any society that will not be immeasurably better, if its members follow it strictly. In fact, it is the only kind of morality that is recognised in many communities. But from the Indian standpoint, it is not perfect or complete, and will not become that, until it is integrated with the principle of total unselfishness. It is with reference to such a standard that common morality is represented as 'lower'. The distinction is not thus one of bad and good, but one of good and better or, perhaps we should say, good and very much better.

It will be noticed that this combined discipline, or the complete adoption by the householder of the ascetic way of life, is represented as the means to a 'greater end' (*mahāphalā*). What is that end? Its nature is not determinable from the context, and commentators generally explain it as *śreyas* whose connotation, unfortunately, is not fixed. But we may well take it to signify, especially in view of what Manu says elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> perfection of character (*sattva-śuddhi*)—the same as it is in the teaching of the *Gītā*—which will, in its turn, serve as the means to the attainment of the final goal of existence.

There are accordingly two ways of synthesising the principle of active life with that of complete asceticism—one as set forth in the *Gītā*, and the other as set forth in the *Smṛti* of Manu.<sup>2</sup> The principle of *niṣkāma-karma* is common to both, but they differ in the extent of its application. The one is ethically more excellent; the other seems better fitted to the psychological nature of man. It would be interesting to find out which of these gospels of life is the older; but our knowledge of the history of ancient Indian thought is, regrettably, too imperfect for it. We have therefore to content ourselves with only noting their

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Tapasā kilbiṣaṁ hanti vidyayāmr̥tam āśnute* || xii. 104. see also ii. 2-5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. in this connection, *Yoga-sūtra*, ii. 31.

logical relation. If we assume that the *Gītā* is later than the *Smṛti* of Manu, it is clear that, on considerations that are chiefly ethical, it has extended the earlier idea of absolutely disinterested activity to the moral life as a whole. If, on the other hand, we assume the reverse to have been the case, it is equally clear that the sphere of application of this idea has been narrowed down considerably, for reasons that are mainly psychological.

We can clearly trace, in the works of some of our great poets, the influence of this ancient belief in two levels of *gārhaṣṭhya* or active life of which, though both are excellent, one is by far superior to the other. We see it, for instance, in the *Kumāra-sambhava* of Kālidāsa where he describes *kāma* or love just in this twofold form. In one, it is relatively lower because it manifests itself as the impulse of an unguarded moment; and, as may be expected, it is soon repressed. But the repression is not the end of the matter here as it is, for instance, in Aśvaghoṣa's description in the *Buddha-carita* of Gautama's triumph over Māra or Death, as *kāma* is called there.<sup>1</sup> Kālidāsa knows that love is the law of life, but only when it is of the higher type. So *kāma* is revived here in a purified form; and then, as the poet has shown in his masterly manner, it becomes the means of saving the whole world from the tyranny of the cruel demon, Tāraka. But the characters chosen here for illustrating this distinction of levels in active life are divine. They are no less than Śiva and Pārvatī. It would therefore be preferable to take another illustration, and we have it in the same poet's *Śākuntalam* where the characters are human.

The heroine of this drama possesses all the qualities, like beauty, grace and innocence, which we associate with maidenly excellence. The very first scene of the Play shows her in the practice of virtues, such as compassion, friendship and joyful service to others. But her character is not perfect, in that the element of *niṛtti* is not fully developed in her; and the occasion for this defect to manifest its consequences soon presents itself. King Duṣyanta, while on a hunting expedition, casually visits

<sup>1</sup> The whole of this topic as well as the distinction between the two ideals has been dwelt upon at greater length in the writer's Presidential Address to the 'Philosophy' section of the All-India Oriental Conference that met at Mysore in 1935. (See viz., 'The Twofold Way of Life' in *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy*, pp. 35-42.—Ed.)

Kaṇva's hermitage. He meets Śakuntalā there, makes love to her; and she accepts it. There is nothing here, let us not forget, that is lacking in decorum or dignity. But it still leaves something to be desired. It shows that, speaking on the whole, it is not Śakuntalā who masters her feelings; it is rather they that master her. She ignores, for instance, the duty she owes to Kaṇva, who is not only her foster-father, but is also the *kula-pati* or the head of the entire hermitage. Disappointment and distress follow; and it is this spiritual lapse, as we might term it, that the curse of Dūrvāśas probably signifies. But the disappointment and the distress do not desiccate her nature, as they might one of a lower type. She utilises them to the utmost towards perfecting her character; and she emerges from the trial as perfect in character as she has always been perfect in beauty of form. The profound change that has been wrought in her is very well indicated, for example, in one of the last scenes where Duṣyanta tries to put the wedding ring again on her finger—the ring which symbolises to her all her past ordeals. Śakuntalā gently, but firmly, declines it, adding at the same time that she would rather *he* wore it. The contrast between the hero and the heroine is here specially noticeable. Duṣyanta also is portrayed in the Play as a great hero. He is an ideal king who ever devotes himself to the welfare of his subjects; and, in his private life, he is represented as never indulging in anything which is out of accord, even in the least, with his Āryan instincts.<sup>1</sup> But we see, in the course of the dramatic action, no such metamorphosis of character in him as we do in Śakuntalā.

It is not merely indirectly that Kālidāsa commends the gradation of self-discipline on a voluntary basis; he expressly refers to it in the well-known stanza,<sup>2</sup> in which, pointing to the sages of Mārīca's hermitage, he says 'These are doing penance where others strive to reach'. But the present generation has no need to go to old literature to find an illustration of the higher form of *gārhaṣṭhya* life. It had, till the other day, an illustrious example of the absolutely selfless life in Mahātmā Gandhi. To quote only a single saying of his, which will throw light on the whole of this ideal, 'Marriage need not conflict with the practice of celibacy'.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Act i. st. 22 and act v. st. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Act. vii. st. 12.

There is one other point about the two types of morality that should have been mentioned earlier but was not, because without illustrations like the above, it might not be clearly understood. We should not think, as we are apt to do from the description of the two types as 'lower' and 'higher', that the distinction between them is one of mere degree; they are, as a matter of fact, different in kind. We cannot accordingly expect that there is a natural and necessary transition from the one to the other. A person may lead a life of common morality ever so long; there is no guarantee that he will pass on, at some stage, to the higher. Ordinarily the transformation does not take place without a crisis in the moral life of a person, which stirs his whole being. But even then it is not all that change, but only those in whom there is a unique moral capacity which, for some reason, was lying latent till then. In brief, the change corresponds to what, in the language of religion, is termed 'conversion'.

## PHILOSOPHY OF VALUES

Indian thinkers commonly speak of two functions of knowledge—one which is theoretical, viz., revealing the existence of objects (*artha-paricchitti*), and the other which is practical, viz., affording help in the attainment of some purpose in life (*phala-prāpti*).<sup>1</sup> The results of these two functions of knowledge are respectively what we mean by 'fact' and 'value'. A thirsty traveller, who happens to come upon a sheet of fresh water, discovers a fact; and, when later he quenches his thirst by drinking the water, he realises a value. These functions are regarded as closely connected with each other, since the knowledge of a fact usually leads to the pursuit of some value. The number of facts that may be known, it is clear, are innumerable; and the values that may be realised through their knowledge are equally so. It is with the latter that we are concerned here. The Sanskrit word used for 'value' means 'the object of desire' (*iṣṭa*), and the term may therefore be generally defined as 'that which is desired'. The opposite of value or 'disvalue' may be taken as 'that which is shunned or avoided' (*dviṣṭa*). For the sake of brevity, we shall speak only of values; but what is said of them will, with appropriate changes, apply to disvalues also.

One of the distinguishing features of Indian Philosophy is that, as a consequence of the pragmatic view it takes of knowledge, it has, throughout its history, given the foremost place to values. Indeed, they form its central theme; and questions like those of 'being' and of 'knowing' come in only as a matter of course. It may, on this account, be described as essentially a philosophy of values. There are various problems connected with value. For instance, it may be asked whether we desire things because they are of value, or whether they are of value because we desire them. For want of space, we cannot consider such general questions here, however important and interesting they may be. We shall confine our attention to the values included in the well-known group of four, viz., *dharma* ('virtue'), *artha* ('wealth'), *kāma* ('pleasure') and *mokṣa* ('self-realisation'). We shall only observe, in passing, that values may be either instrumental or intrinsic. Thus in the example given above,

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Vātsyāyana's Com. on *Nyāya-sūtra*, I. i. 1 and 3.

water is an instrumental value; and the quenching of thirst by means of it is an intrinsic value. That is, tho' the term 'value' is primarily used for the ends that are sought, often the means to their attainment are also, by courtesy, called so.<sup>1</sup>

Tho' all the above four are ordinarily reckoned as values of life, a distinction is sometimes made within them, according to which only the first three are regarded so, excluding the last one of *mokṣa*. Early works like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, for example, often refer to them alone. But it would be wrong to conclude therefrom that the fourth value of *mokṣa* was not known at the time,<sup>2</sup> for these epics and other early works themselves refer to it also. In fact, the ideal of *mokṣa* is, at least, as old as the Upaniṣads. The restriction of the name of 'value' to the 'aggregate of three' or the *tri-varga*, as this group is designated, probably only means that the writers of the works in question address themselves chiefly to the common people, for whom the final ideal of *mokṣa* is of little immediate interest. Whatever the reason for this inner distinction may be, it is a convenient one; and we shall adopt it in our treatment of the subject here.

# I

To take up the *tri-varga* for consideration first: In this group of three, *artha* may be said to stand for economic value; *kāma* for psychological value and *dharma*, for moral value. To speak in the main, *artha* is an instrumental value, for it is helpful in satisfying one or other of the diverse needs of life. Their satisfaction is *kāma*, which is an intrinsic value, since it does not admit of the question of 'why?' We may, for example ask why we seek food; but we cannot similarly ask what for we seek the satisfaction, arising from the partaking of it. We describe it as 'psychological value', not in its usual sense of subjective value in general, but in that of an end which satisfies the natural impulses of an individual as such. These two values of *artha*<sup>3</sup> and *kāma* are sought not only by man, but by all sentient

<sup>1</sup> See *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, ch. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly it was not once acknowledged by some like the early Mīmāṃsākās or Yajñīkas.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Burns, in one of his well-known poems, speaks of finding ears of corn hoarded in the 'nest' of a mouse when it was turned up by a plough.



creatures. The only difference is that, while man can seek them knowingly, the other creatures do so instinctively. In this distinction, we find the characteristic feature of *puruṣārthas* or 'human values,' viz., that they represent ends that are *consciously* pursued. When they are sought otherwise by him, as they sometimes are, they may remain values but cease to be *puruṣārtha*. The possibility of his seeking them unconsciously is due to the fact that man combines in himself the character of an animal and that of a self-conscious agent—that he is not merely a spiritual but also a natural being. The wants which are common to man and the lower animals and whose urge is natural, rather than spiritual, are self-preservation and the propagation of off-spring, or, as it may otherwise be stated, race-conservation.

The case is quite different as regards *dharma*, for its appeal is restricted to man. While it is virtually unknown to the lower animals, man may be said to be innately aware of it.<sup>1</sup> In this consists its uniqueness as compared with the other two values of *artha* and *kāma*, and we shall presently see in what respect it is superior to them. We have rendered it as 'moral value'; and some forms of Indian thought, like early Buddhism, will bear us out completely here. But in others, especially the so-called orthodox systems, the connotation of the term is much wider, for they include under it not only moral but also religious values, such as are detailed in the ritualistic portions of the Veda. But, in accordance with a principle recognised from very early times, viz., that ceremonial is of little avail to those who are morally impure,<sup>2</sup> the practice of virtue becomes a necessary condition of ritualistic life. We also find it stated in some ancient works of this tradition that, as between ritual and virtue, the latter is certainly to be preferred. The *Mahābhārata*, in a familiar verse, declares that 'speaking the truth is far better than celebrating many horse-sacrifices'.<sup>3</sup> Gautama, one of the oldest among the law-givers, places what he terms the 'virtues of the soul' (*ātma-guṇa*), like kindness and purity, above mere ceremonial.<sup>4</sup> These are the reasons why we have rendered the term as 'moral value', and we shall confine our attention in what follows solely to that aspect of *dharma*.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, I. iv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ācāra-hīnaṁ na punanti Vedāḥ*: Vasiṣṭha's *Dharma-sūtra*, vi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Aśva-medha sahasrāt tu satyam ekaṁ viśiṣyate*. <sup>4</sup> viii. 20-3.

The notion of *dharma*, thus restricted, is so familiar that it is hardly necessary to refer to examples of virtues whose cultivation it signifies. Yet to give a general idea of them, we shall refer to one of the several lists of them found in the old works. Yājñavalkya, in the *Smṛti* which goes by his name, reckons them as nine<sup>1</sup>—non-injury, sincerity, honesty, cleanliness, control of the senses, charity, self-restraint, love and forbearance. It will be seen that some of these, like non-injury and charity, have a reference to the good of others or are altruistic while others, like sincerity and self-restraint, serve to develop one's own character and will. It should not, however, be thought that this division into self-regarding and other-regarding virtues is a hard and fast one for as the individual has no life of his own independently of his social relations, the former have a bearing on others, as surely as the latter have on oneself.

What is the relation of *dharma* to *artha* and *kāma*? Or, as *artha* is ordinarily but a means to *kāma*, we may narrow the scope of our question and ask: What is the relation of *dharma* to *kāma*? If *kāma* stands for pleasure, as stated above, we may say that it is desired by all, for pleasure is always welcome to every one. Indeed, we cannot help desiring our own felicity. But not every thing desired is necessarily *desirable*. A sick person may long for a certain kind of food, but it may not at all be advisable for him to partake of it from the standpoint of his physical well-being. That is, *kāma*, while it may be an object of desire, may not always be desirable; and, though appearing to be a true value of life, it may not really be so or may even prove to be a disvalue. How then can we distinguish these two kinds of *kāma*? To speak with reference only to the *tri-varga* which we are now considering, *dharma* furnishes the necessary criterion. That variety of *kāma* is a true value, which is in accord with the requirements of *dharma*, but not any other. In thus helping us to discriminate between good and bad *kāma* or in rationalising it, as we might put it, consists the superiority of *dharma*; and it is accordingly reckoned as the highest of the three values. This conception of *dharma* as a regulative principle

<sup>1</sup> *Ahimsā satyam asteyam saucam indriya-nigrahaḥ | Dānam damo dayā kṣāntiḥ sarveṣāṃ dharma-sādhanaṃ ||* (i. 122). (*Buddhikarmendriyāṇāṃ niyata-viśaya-ṛttitā indriya-nigrahaḥ | antaḥkaraṇa-samyamo damaḥ | āpannarakṣaṇaṃ dayā | apakāre'pi cittasyāvikāraḥ kṣāntiḥ |*)

is so important in the philosophy of conduct that all the *sāstras* and all the higher literature of India (the latter, though only impliedly) emphasise it. That is, for example, what Sri Krishna means when he says in the *Gītā*: *Dharmāvīruddhaḥ kāmō'smi*: 'I am *kāma*, not at strife with *dharma*'.<sup>1</sup>

Having considered the general nature of *dharma* and its relation to *kāma*, and therefore also to *artha* which is commonly but a means to it, we may ask whether its function is limited to regulating the pursuit of these two values or whether it has any purpose of its own. There are two answers to be given to this question:

(1) The popular view, and probably also the older of the two, is that it has a purpose of its own. In this view then, *dharma* is conceived as an instrumental value. A steadfast pursuit of it, in its double aspect of self-regarding and other-regarding virtues, results in one's good here as well as elsewhere; and this good—whether it stands for worldly happiness or heavenly bliss—is, as a whole, designated *abhyudaya* or 'prosperity'. Further, it is believed that *dharma* not only leads to the good, but that it does so invariably. Here is another reason for its superiority over the other two values, whose pursuit may or may not be successful. But it should be added that, for the attainment of the fruit of *dharma*, one may have to wait for very long. The important point, however, is that it is sure to yield its fruit at some time, even though it be after many vicissitudes. It is the possible postponement of the result to an indefinite future that explains the common indifference of men towards *dharma*, notwithstanding their awareness of its excellence. It is this human short-sightedness that Vyāsa, for example, has in his mind when, in concluding the *Mahābhārata*,<sup>2</sup> he says 'Here I am, crying out with uplifted arms that *dharma* brings with it both *artha* and *kāma*; but no one listens to me'. The same feeling of sad astonishment at human folly is echoed in a common saying that 'people want the fruits of *dharma*, but not *dharma* itself'.<sup>3</sup>

(2) The other view is that *dharma* is an intrinsic value and therefore an end in and for itself. It is maintained by some *Mīmāṃsakas*, viz., those of the *Prabhākara* school. They ridicule

<sup>1</sup> vii. 11. <sup>2</sup> XVIII. v. 75. <sup>3</sup> *Puṇyasya phalam icchanti puṇyam necchanti mānavāḥ*.

the idea that virtue should appeal to man's interest for being practised. That would be to look upon man as a creature of inclination and forget that he is a moral agent, who has the power to do what he ought and to abstain from doing what he ought not.<sup>1</sup> Further, they allege that such a view makes *dharma* not only a means, but also a means to the admittedly inferior value of *kāma*, by making it minister to the doer's felicity. However unexceptionable the *kāma* pursued may be in its nature, and whatever altruistic activity it may incidentally involve, it finally stands for a subjective end or, in plainer terms, for self-love. If there is a moral principle, it must be absolute in the sense that it has nothing to do with our likes and dislikes and that it should be followed solely out of respect for it. It is the nature of *dharma*, they say, to be thus ultimate. Here we have the well-known principle of practising virtue *for its own sake*; and the student of Western philosophy will see in it a general kinship with Kant's teaching of the 'categorical imperative', that is, a command about which there is nothing contingent or conditional.

This will, no doubt, appear at first as a very exalted view of *dharma* or 'duty', if we may use that term instead, worthy to evoke our admiration. But it is really untenable, because it is based upon unsound psychology. It assumes that voluntary activity is possible without any end in view or, to put the same in another way, that it forms its own end (*svayam-prayojanabhūta*).<sup>2</sup> But how can anything be its own consequence? To accept such a view, as Śaṅkara observes, changes what is put forward as a 'gospel of duty' into a 'gospel of drudgery'.<sup>3</sup> For, in that case, devotion to duty would mean present toil; and dereliction of it, future evil, so that whether a person does his duty or leaves it undone, he has only trouble as his lot in life. Hence this view of *dharma* has not come to prevail. It was once for all given up in India when Maṇḍana, a contemporary of

<sup>1</sup> The Prābhākaras might admit the distinction, made above, between good and bad *kāma*. But they would not attach any moral value to the former for, while it may connote prudence, it is not altogether free from bondage to inclination.

<sup>2</sup> *Tantra-rahasya* (Gaekwad Oriental Series), p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Com. on Gūṇā*, iii. i. *Vihitasya karaṇākaraṇayoḥ duḥkṣa-mātraphalatvāt*. cf. *com.* on iv. 18.

Śaṅkara, enunciated the principle that 'nothing prompts a man to acts of will, but what is a means to some desired end'.<sup>1</sup>

## II

So much about *tri-varga*. When we shift our standpoint from the system of the three values to that of the four (*caturvarṇa*) including *mokṣa*, we find the conception of *dharma* undergo a profound change, which makes it superior to that in either of the above views. It continues here to be regarded as an instrumental value, as in the first of them; but the end, which it is taken to serve, is not the agent's 'prosperity'. It is rather the purification of one's character or, as the term used for it in Sanskrit means, 'the cleansing of one's mind' (*sattva-suddhi*) by purging it of all lower or selfish impulses. This cleansing is effected through the performance of the duties for which *dharma* stands in the manner taught in the *Gītā*, that is, without any thought whatsoever of their fruit. Thus, if the former view commends partial abnegation of *kāma* and thereby rationalises life's activities, as we have said, the present one commends its total abnegation and thus spiritualises them. Its true character of a higher value is restored to *dharma* here for, in contrast with the other view, it wholly ceases to be subservient to *kāma*. The weakness of that view, then, is not in its conception of *dharma* as a means to an end, but only in its insistence that the end is some form of happiness for the doer. In this rejection of 'prosperity' or personal benefit as the aim, the present view resembles that of the Prabhākara school; but, at the same time, it differs vitally from that view in holding that *dharma* has an end, and thus denying that there can be any voluntary activity without an appropriate motive. It is this changed conception of *dharma* that has come to prevail in Indian philosophy, and not either of the above.

But it may be said that moral purification or the conquest of the lower self is too negative in its nature to prompt voluntary activity. So it is necessary to add that actually, in this view, self-conquest is only the immediate end of *dharma*, while its final aim is *mokṣa* or self-realisation.<sup>2</sup> This is the ultimate value;

<sup>1</sup> *Puṁsān neṣṭābhyupāyavāt kriyāsu anyah pravartakah* (*Vidhiviveka*, p. 243).

<sup>2</sup> The ultimate goal is God-realisation in theistic doctrines; but it too is to be achieved, generally speaking, through self-realisation.

and its conception is quite positive, since it consists not in merely subjugating the lower self, but also in growing into the higher one. Or, to state the same otherwise, it implies gaining the larger life, and not merely leaving the narrow life behind. This change in the older view of *dharma* or its transvaluation, viz., that it is a means to *mokṣa* is already made in the Upaniṣads.<sup>1</sup> But it is not the only means and requires, as indicated by our characterisation of the final goal, to be supported by a knowledge of what the higher or true self is. And it cannot be known fully and well, unless it is known in its relation to the rest of reality. This knowledge of the self in relation to its environment, social and physical, represents philosophic truth. Like the good, then, the true also is here conceived as an instrumental value, both alike being means to *mokṣa*.<sup>2</sup> The several systems differ in the place they assign to these two means in the scheme of life's discipline. But it will suffice for our purpose to say, following Śaṅkara, that a successful pursuit of the good is required as a condition indispensable for the pursuit of the true.

We have seen that seeking the good is essentially for the purification of character. The search after the true is for removing our ignorance (*avidyā*) about the ultimate reality, which is the necessary implication of all our efforts to philosophise. But for such ignorance, man's desire to know the nature of reality, which is so natural to him, would be wholly unintelligible. This desire, so far as it is theoretical, is satisfied when we learn the final truth and are intellectually convinced of it. But intellectual conviction is not all that is needed for reaching the goal, since the actual effects of the ignorance are directly experienced by us in daily life and require, if they are to be removed, an equally direct experience of the truth about reality. For example, most of us feel the empirical self to be the true self, while the fact, according to many of the systems, is that it is not so. But a mere intellectual conviction, which is what is commonly meant by philosophic truth, is scarcely of use in dismissing such beliefs. A perceptual illusion, for instance, is dispelled only by a perceptual experience of the fact underlying

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV. iv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that the good and the true should not be pursued for their own sake. What is meant is only that they find their fulfilment in self-realisation.

the illusion and not, e.g., by a hearsay knowledge of it. Seeing, it is said, is believing. Hence all the Indian schools prescribe a proper course of practical discipline to bring about this consummation, viz., transforming a mere intellectual conviction into direct experience. The chief element in it is *dhyāna* or *yoga* which means learning to steady the mind and, thereafter, constantly dwelling upon the truth, of which one has been intellectually convinced, until it culminates in direct experience. It is then that the aspirant realises himself and becomes spiritually free.

What is the exact nature of this ultimate ideal called *mokṣa*? It is held by some to be a state of absolute bliss; and by others, as one merely of absence of all pain and suffering. The distinction depends upon a difference in the conception of the self in the various systems. Bliss or joy is intrinsic to it, according to some, and it therefore naturally reveals itself when the self is released from bondage. According to others, neither bliss nor its opposite belongs to the self, and it is therefore without either in the condition of *mokṣa* when its true nature is restored to it. Before describing this condition further, it is necessary to briefly refer to an objection that is sure to occur to the reader at the above characterisation of *mokṣa* in terms of pleasure and absence of pain, viz., that the ideal is hedonistic—a view which is now regarded as psychologically quite faulty. This is an objection which, on a superficial view, applies to the whole of the Indian theory of value; but whatever the answer to that general objection may be, the charge of hedonism does not, in the least, affect the conception of the ultimate value with which we are now concerned. For the pleasure for which it stands should be unmixed, and there should be no lapse from it when it is once attained—conditions which the kind of pleasure the hedonist has in view does not, and is not meant to, satisfy. In fact, *mokṣa* means absolute or unconditioned bliss (or, alternatively, absence of suffering), which is vastly different from the pleasure that hedonism holds to be the supreme end of life.

Now to revert to the consideration of the nature of *mokṣa*. Śaṅkara has remarked that attaining the goal of life signifies nothing more than perfecting the means to it.<sup>1</sup> That is to say,

<sup>1</sup> See com. on Gītā, ii. 55: *Sarvatraiva hi adhyātma-sāstre yāni yatna-sādhyāni sādhanāni lakṣaṇāni ca bhavanti tāni*. Cf. com. on xiv. 25.

the end here is not external to the means, but is only the means stabilised. This gives us a clue as regards the kind of life which a knower leads, and enables us thereby to grasp the exact meaning of *mokṣa*. We have mentioned two aids to the attainment of the goal, pursuing the good and acquiring a knowledge of the true self. Corresponding to these, the life of the knower, broadly speaking, will be characterised by two features. In the first place, it will be entirely free from the tyranny of the egoistic self, and therefore also free from the feverish activity for gratifying personal desires which can never be completely gratified. In the second place, it will be marked by an unshakable conviction in the unity of all, and consequently by love for others—love for them, not as equals but as essentially one with oneself. Such love will necessarily result in altruistic work for, while there is nothing that a freed man wants for himself, he sees others immersed in so much ignorance and suffering. No doubt, he was doing such work even before he became free; but that was more or less in the nature of conscious strife. Now it becomes quite spontaneous. This is in monistic schools. In pluralistic systems also, the same will be the case, the only difference being that the enlightened person will help others prompted by pity or compassion, rather than love in the above sense. Thus, whether it be in monistic or pluralistic schools, the knower, after gaining enlightenment and freedom, for himself, will strive to spread that enlightenment among others and secure for them the same freedom, so far as it lies in his power. There is in this regard the magnanimous example of Buddha who, we may remark by the way, is only one instance among several that have appeared in the spiritual history of India. Hence, though the final aim of life or the ultimate value is here stated to be self-realisation, it is really very much more, for it also signifies doing one's utmost to secure universal good.

We have described the state of *mokṣa* from the standpoint of what is called *jīvanmukṭi* or 'liberation while one is still alive', for it is sure to make a better appeal to the modern mind. This ideal, however, is not accepted in all the systems, but only in some like the Advaita, Sāṅkhya-Yoga and Buddhism. The others insist that spiritual freedom will not actually be attained until after physical death. It is known as *videhamukṭi*. But even these systems may be said to admit *jīvanmukṭi* in fact, though not



in name, for they postulate final release in the case of an enlightened person as soon as he leaves his physical body, implying thereby that there is nothing more to be done by him for attaining *mokṣa*. The distinction between the two views reduces itself finally to this: whether or not the discipline prescribed for the spiritual aspirant should as such (that is, under a sense of constraint) continue in the interval between the dawn of true knowledge and the moment of physical death. According to those who do not accept the ideal of *jīvanmukṭi*, it should continue, while according to the rest, it need not.

The question that now remains to ask is whether such an ideal can be achieved at all. In one sense, the question is not legitimate because *mokṣa*, standing as it does for a progressive attainment, is being realised at every stage. But it may be taken to mean whether the process of self-realisation is an endless one or has a culminating stage; and if it has such a stage, whether it is attainable. All the Indian systems, including the non-Vedic ones, are of *opinion* that this process is directed to a definite goal, and that that goal can assuredly be achieved. According to them, the evil of *saṁsāra* or bondage carries with it the seeds of its own destruction, and it is sooner or later bound to be superseded by the good. In other words, none of the Indian schools is finally pessimistic, and the present-day criticism that they are 'gospels of woe' is entirely wrong. We have more than one interesting indication in the Sanskrit language of this faith of the Indian in the ultimate goodness and rationality of the world. The Sanskrit word *sat*, as noticed by Max Müller long ago, means not only 'the real' but also 'the good'. Similarly, the word *bhavya*, we may add, means not only 'what will happen in the future' but also 'what is auspicious', implying that the best is yet to be.

### III

Besides the ultimate value of self-realisation, we have referred to truth and goodness. But the latter are only two of the three, including beauty, which are now grouped together and are termed the 'trinity of values'. We have, thus far, said nothing about the last. It is too vast as a subject even to be touched upon in this short paper. If, however, the reader wants to get

an idea of what the conception of aesthetic value is, from the purely philosophic standpoint, he may consult the article on the Sāṅkhya System<sup>1</sup> where some of its features, according to one important doctrine, are briefly indicated.

<sup>1</sup> [See *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy*.]